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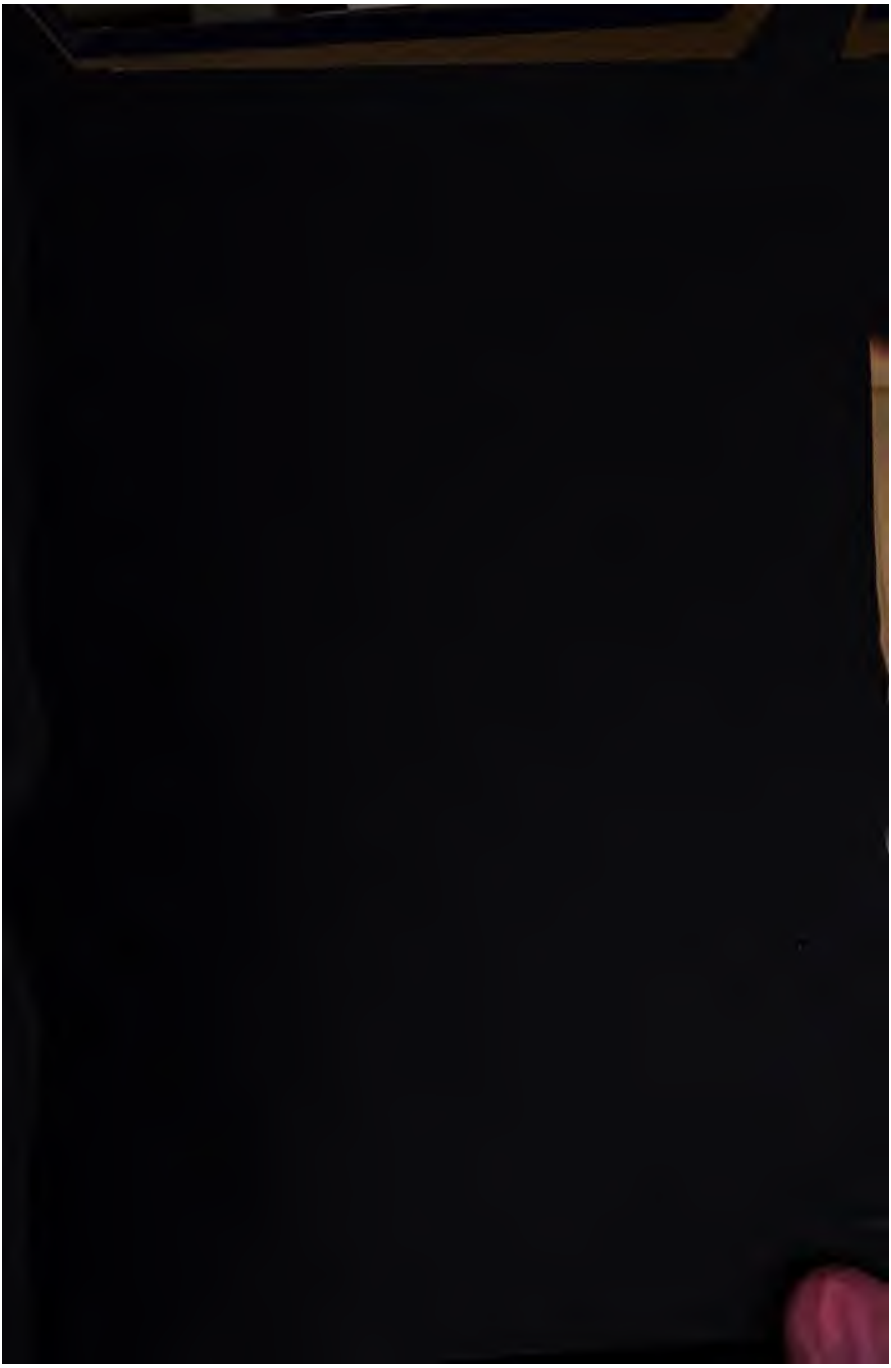

SEEDS OF THOUGHT.

BY

WILLIAM TAIT, D.D.

LATE INCUMBENT OF ST. MATTHEW'S, RUGBY, NOW OF TRINITY CHURCH, PAU, FRANCE.

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TO THE

Congregation of Trinity Church, Pau.

—o—

My dear Friends,—

I have reprinted this little volume at the recommendation of many whose judgment I esteem; and I dedicate it to you in affectionate remembrance of the sympathy you shewed to me at a time of overwhelming sorrow; your kindness on that sad occasion will never leave my memory.

Your very affectionate Pastor,

WILLIAM TAIT.

October 1881.

PREFACE TO NEW EDITION.

—o—

THIS little work was originally the fruit of a Congregational Bible-class. The short expositions contained in it, are simply a very few of the answers and explanations which from time to time were given. And as the writer has been out of England for the last seventeen years, he may be permitted to preface it by the kind words which follow:—

I very willingly comply with the request of the thoughtful and devout author of this work, that I would preface the Second Edition with a few words of recommendation. There is, I imagine, a growing demand for works of this character, which may assist in that most difficult but most fruitful of all devotional exercises, meditation on Holy Scripture. Dr. Tait gives in this work a meditation (such as even an intelligent

mind, imbued with Holy Scripture, might find it difficult to frame for itself) for each week. And the title explains why the meditation is to be made to serve for the *week*. It may be read over, each day, in the seasons of devotional retirement, with such ejaculatory prayers and aspirations as may arise out of it, or be suggested by it. The work contains *seeds* of truth; and seeds must lie a long while in the soil before they germinate. It is hoped that each of these seeds, by lying in the mind for seven days, may stir some effort of thought in a new and profitable direction.

The greatest service which a religious teacher can confer on those whom he instructs, whether from the pulpit or from the press, is to lead and stimulate them to think for themselves. And if it is read with something beyond simple attention, with patient and thoughtful and prayerful study, I cannot doubt that the reader will find this little book very useful. He will occasionally come across thoughts of rare beauty (as "The Hope of Resurrection" on the Seventh Sunday): and of great depth (as "The Two Rests," on the

Fifteenth Sunday). And the simplicity and luminousness with which the thoughts are in all cases expressed, will do much to commend them.

The book, as a single glance will show, is full of those doctrines of grace which are known under the name of "Evangelical." But the cultivation and thoughtfulness of the writer are a guarantee that neither in this nor in any other of his works will narrowness or party-spirit be found, or want of sympathy with those who, while equally sincere and devout in their allegiance to our common Master, regard Christian truth (it may be) from a somewhat different point of view.

EDWARD MEYRICK GOULBURN, D.D.,
Dean of Norwich.

DEANERY, NORWICH,
July 16, 1881.

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FIRST SUNDAY.

Cherubim and Flaming Sword.

GENESIS III. 24.

"He placed at the east of Eden Cherubim; and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life."

THERE were two trees in Eden, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. The one was the tree of probation, and by eating of its fruit man had already fallen. The other was the tree of recompense. And to prevent the creature who had failed in his probation from putting forth his hand to the recompense, God had just driven out the man.

God does nothing by halves. The driving out was to be definitive. "A flaming sword" was therefore placed "at the east of Eden," debarring all access to the tree of life. From whatever quarter the presumptuous intruder approached, this sword was upon him. Whether he tried

the north, the south, the east, the west, it turned round and faced him. If he persisted, death was the penalty, he could only be cut asunder or consumed.

But it was not therefore God's purpose to drive fallen man to despair. And so the "Cherubim" were beside the flaming sword. We find these Cherubim everywhere throughout Scripture, and they are always emblems of redeeming love. "Cherubim of glory" were found in the tabernacle, "shadowing the mercy-seat with their wings." "Cherubim and palm-trees," the symbol of triumph, were carved on the walls of the temple (1 Kings vi. 29). Ezekiel saw them in a living form, and "the glory of the God of Israel was over them above" (Ezek. x. 19). Isaiah also saw them proclaiming God's glory in His temple, when one of them reassured the trembling prophet by laying a live coal on his lips (Isa. vi. 6, 7). Finally, St. John saw them in his visions of the Church in glory. They were beside the crowned elders, the "Lamb as it had been slain, in the midst." And they opened to him by the Lamb's command the book of the Divine purpose, "the

revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him" (Rev. v. 6, vi. 1, 3, 5, 7).

The Cherubim of Genesis, whatever they were, must have possessed the same character. Their object must have been to tell man that God still loved him; that His thoughts toward him were thoughts of peace; that the Seed of the Woman should bruise the head of the Serpent; that he who trusted in eternal mercy should never be put to shame. A double lesson was thus taught—the lesson of self-despair, the lesson of "good hope through grace." The flaming sword taught the one; the Cherubim, as their glory shone over Eden's eastern boundary, emphatically proclaimed the other.

All acquainted with the Bible must know that this is the double lesson which God enforces in all His Word; it appears in every form from Genesis to Revelation. It was specially taught under the Old Testament by the arrangements of the tabernacle and temple. God's people were debarred from His presence; none but the High Priest might approach Him, and that only once a year. And yet, to keep hope alive, while Israel prayed

without, that Minister came forth from within, and pronounced on the kneeling worshippers the fulness of the blessing of their God. It is taught under the New by that which gives the New its character, the Cross of the Lord Jesus. If even the Son of God could not escape the doom of death, we sinners may well despair. If the love of the Everlasting Father toward us has its measure in that death, there is no blessing in time or eternity which we may not expect from God's hand.

We cannot serve God acceptably till we have learned this double lesson. If we think by our doings to find our way to life, we shall be rejected, as was Cain, the first Pharisee, and also the first murderer. "What must I DO?" was the question of the terrified jailor. *You can do nothing*, was St. Paul's answer, put your trust in what another has done, "BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST" (Acts xvi. 31).

SECOND SUNDAY.

"The Lord thy God."

EXODUS XX. 1–11.

1st Commandment—"I am the Lord *thy God*." 2d Commandment—"I the Lord *thy God* am a jealous God." 3d Commandment—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord *thy God* in vain." 4th Commandment—"The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord *thy God*."

THE first table of the law contained Israel's duty to God. And let us observe that each of the commandments into which it was divided had in it the encouraging words, "thy God." "I am the Lord" reminded simply of power and authority; "thy God" reminded also of love. This was just the difference between the *Baal* of the Canaanite and the *Jehovah* of Israel. Baal signified Lord. His worshippers regarded him as a Being of dreadful power, whose wrath they sought to propitiate even by slaying their own children. But Jehovah presented Himself as

One in whom love was allied with power—"who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." He asked love therefore, in return for love: "Thou shalt have none other gods but Me." He asked reverence for His name and His Sabbaths; His love had deserved both. He told them that He was a jealous God: love is always jealous; it craves a return of affection; it cannot be satisfied without it.

We have to do with all this, for God deals with us now as He did with Israel when gathered at the foot of Sinai. He does not preface His commands with merely "I am the Lord." Such commands would drive to despair. There is nothing so dreadful as power without love. There is no consciousness so terrible as that we are in the hands of One who can do what He pleases with us, and does not care whether we are made miserable or not. The awful word *Lord*, importing authority which none may question, and power against which none may rise up, is therefore relieved by its adjunct, "thy God." How beautifully this union of power and love appears in our Lord Jesus! "Ye call me Master and

Lord, and ye say well, for so I am:" "I your Lord and Master have washed your feet." He who stooped so low, and on the next morning stooped yet lower, bearing our sins in His own body, was "the image of the invisible God." While therefore, we look up to that Invisible One as our Lord and Master, we say to Him also "Our Father which art in Heaven." The terribleness of power, the majesty of authority, are softened by the tenderness of love. That power is in the hands of One who seeks our happiness; that authority is wielded by One whose commands cannot be grievous. If He bids us have no other gods, it is but asking us to love as we have first been loved. If He bids us reverence His name and ordinances, reverence is but the dutiful feeling of the loving heart. If He declares Himself a jealous God, it is only what we should expect from His love. If He did not seek our hearts, it would tell that we had no place in His.

"I will run the way of Thy commandments," the Psalmist says, "when Thou hast set my heart at liberty." To be afraid of God is bondage; peace with God is liberty. It is found in the

words "the Lord *thy God.*" Some trembling soul asks, Am I warranted to believe them? Warranted! you are commanded; they occur in the bosom of *the law:* "Thou shalt *love* the Lord *thy God.*" Are you warranted to love? You have the same warrant to believe. "This is *His commandment*, that we should believe on the name of His Son" (1 John iii. 23). "The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6) is only a fuller opening up of the "wondrous things" of the eternal law of love (Ps. cxix. 18). Let us ask the Spirit of the Lord to open our eyes that we may see: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. iii. 17).

THIRD SUNDAY.

Type of the Dead and Living Bird.

(*See*) LEVITICUS XIV. 1-7.

Two birds were to be brought for the cleansing of the leper. The one was to be killed in an earthen vessel over running water; the other was to be dipped, along with cedar-wood, and scarlet, and hyssop, in the blood of its slain fellow, was to be used along with these for the sprinkling of the leper, and was then to be let loose into the open field. All this accomplished, the leper was pronounced clean.

This is one of the most beautiful of all the Old Testament types. It resembles that of the scape (escape) goat, so called because while its fellow was slain, it was allowed to escape. The bird of the text may, in like manner, be called *the escape-bird.*

There can be no doubt that both types set forth

the Saviour—dying and living again. One goat and bird did not escape, but died. So Christ did not escape; He died. The other goat and bird went forth unharmed, the goat into the wilderness, the bird into the open field. In like manner Christ escaped. His people shall sing in the glorious resurrection-morning, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped." It was His own song on that morning of joy and blessedness when He "was brought again from the dead by the glory of the Father." And had we seen the glad bird skimming the air, we should have seen the most expressive of types — the glad Saviour leaving death and the devil and an evil world behind Him, and ascending to His Father's presence.

From this we see the necessity of *two* goats and *two* birds, the one *to die*, the other *to live*. Death and life meet in Christ; one type could not have represented both. If we had asked the cleansed leper, where is your leprosy? he would have answered, The bird now dead, has been killed for it, and the living bird *has flown away*

with it ; see him as he rises, the blood of his fellow on his wing ! If we had asked Israel on the day of atonement, where are your sins ? they would have answered, The goat of sacrifice has died for them, and the live goat *has carried them off;* they are not here. Let us pass to the Antitype; let us ask the believer, where are your sins ? He that was dead, will be his answer, shed His blood for them ; and alive now, He *has carried them away,* entering with that blood into the holy place, my Mediator, High Priest, and Advocate. *They are not here; they trouble my conscience no more.*

The greatest crime ever committed on earth was the murder of the Son of God. And yet those who on Pentecost were solemnly charged with that crime were found immediately after in perfect peace, eating their meat " with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God." They had received His testimony of a slain and living Saviour, and their consciences were at rest.

This peace of conscience through the sprinkling of Christ's blood is the cleansing of the leper. Leprosy, the most loathsome and defiling of bodily

diseases, is the type of sin, "that abominable thing," which God hates. It prevented a man from approaching His tabernacle, it shut him out from acceptable worship. And sin on the conscience, in like manner, will not allow us to draw near to God as a Father, and is an effectual hindrance to all acceptable worship and service. But when we know that the Son of God has died for our sins, when we know also that He has carried them away with Him, and that we shall hear of them no more, the conscience is relieved of its load. We rise up into liberty, "the glorious liberty of the children of God," and call on His name as a Father with true and thankful hearts. Lord, ever more grant us such cleansing!

FOURTH SUNDAY.

God Himself the Object of Faith.

NUMBERS XIV. 11.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke Me? and how long will it be *ere they believe Me*, for all the signs which I have showed among them?"

WHAT are we to understand by these words? Is the infidel Gibbon justified in his sneer that the generation *which saw* the mighty works in Egypt and the wilderness was the only generation of the chosen people which never believed in their reality? He is not justified. The text does not say, "believe the signs;" it says, "believe Me." The difference between these two is very great. Had we asked any of the congregation of Israel at this memorable and melancholy season, Do you acknowledge the reality of those mighty works in Egypt and the wilderness? they would have answered with one voice, We do. Can I

forget, one would have said, Egypt's cry of anguish on the night when her first-born were smitten? It will never leave my memory. Can I forget, another would have asked, that I walked with my fellows through the slimy bottom of the deep, when the waters were a wall to us on the right hand and on the left? It was only yesterday, a third would have exclaimed, that I and my children and my cattle drank of the smitten rock. It was this morning only, a fourth would have added, that I saw the manna descend around our tents, and gathered it for me and mine. Had we asked them further, Do you believe that these wondrous things were the doings of Almighty God, the stretching forth of His hand, the making bare His glorious arm? they would have answered again, *We do.* Men were simpler in those days; they acknowledged miraculous agency. Where, then, was the *unbelief* of which God complains in the words before us? Another word will bring it out. We say to them again, Then of course you believe that the God of your fathers loves you, and that His one earnest desire is to bless and make you happy? They answer with

one voice, *We do not.* The mighty works we do not question, nor the Divine power which wrought them. But the past has never convinced us that He to whom that power belongs really loves and cares for us. We have never trusted Him hitherto, nor will we trust Him now.

It is of this that the words before us complain. Israel "believed not *God.*" Hence they never loved Him, and not loving Him, they never obeyed His voice; and continuing rebellious to the end, they left their bones in the sandy desert.

THIS, THEN, IS UNBELIEF. And it is no record of the past, we see it around us every day. When men trample on the commandments of God, we know of a surety that they do not love Him; and if men do not love, it is because they do not believe. Theyanswer indignantly, We do believe. We have never questioned that the mercies which we every day receive, sleep and food and raiment, are the gifts of a gracious Creator; He has bestowed them in the past, and we look to Him to bestow them still. All this may be. But God's love to us personally is written on these daily mercies as legibly and

distinctly as ever it was written of old on the wonders of Egypt and the wilderness. And if we have not read and learned the lesson which our mercies teach, we may acknowledge every one of them and be unbelievers in God still.

The same class of persons profess faith in Christian verities. There is no article of the creed, they tell us, which we have ever questioned. It may be so, but what have these articles revealed? Have they convinced us of the personal love of the Almighty Father of heaven—that He is a Father to us? Have they revealed the Son as our Saviour, the taker away of our sins? Can we trust that Father's love? Can we confide in that Saviour's everlasting mercy? If not, we are unbelievers, as Israel were of old. We acknowledge the facts as they did; like them also, we are blind to the lesson of the facts.

The belief of facts is quite secondary; what God desires is, that we believe *in Him.* His presence is the joy of eternity and constitutes everlasting life. The preparation for this joy therefore, the earnest of this life, is acquainting ourselves WITH HIM now.

FIFTH SUNDAY.

Cleansing by Blood.

NUMBERS XXXV. 33.

"Blood, it defileth the land, and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it."

THIS enactment throws light of the most important kind—light from God Himself—on the nature and necessity of atonement. "Blood shed therein" defiles a land. But if he who shed it, finds no shelter nor hiding-place, if he is sought out and delivered up to justice, if the authorities of that land cause execution to be done upon him, the land is cleansed. The guilt of blood no longer lies upon it; it is the murderer's alone. If, on the other hand, he finds protection and sympathy, and justice is baffled in her pursuit, the people of the land adopt his crime; it becomes theirs; the stain of blood remains on them.

To apply these principles to the great question before us—man is the criminal, sin his crime. No sin is done in a corner. It is committed under the eye of God's Majesty, the Supreme Authority of Heaven and Earth. To suppose it therefore unavenged, is to make Him the Patron of transgression. Man the criminal must die the death. But how shall this be when "*all* have sinned"? All must perish, and this were destruction, not cleansing. A Representative Man must be found, and that "one man must die for the people, that the whole nation"—the whole human family—"perish not" (John xi. 50). Such a Representative Man was the Lord Jesus. When "He was made SIN for us" (2 Cor. v. 21), *He stood before God as if He had committed all the sin that ever had been committed in the World.* And so He died. In executing on Him the sentence of the violated law, God declared Himself sin's everlasting enemy. And man in the person of Christ, delivering Himself the willing victim of justice, consented to God's judgment.

There is cleansing, therefore, as if the criminal himself had died. The stain of crime

is not upon the Executive, it has supported the law and carried out its sentence. Neither is it on the human family, justice has had its victim freely delivered up. "Mercy rejoices against judgment;" who can forbid it? We have God's word of forgiveness from his oracle, for His eye is fixed on Calvary. Man is invited to His presence; sin has become Christ's, that it may be man's no longer.

But there must be an individual application of this mercy, a special as well as a general cleansing. "The blood of Jesus Christ," says St. John (1 John i. 7), "cleanseth us from all sin." When we acknowledge our desert of judgment; when we assent to the confession which Christ has made in our name; when we make His Self-surrender to death our personal and particular act; when we thankfully accept the amnesty which His blood has purchased—we are clean indeed. The vessels of the Tabernacle, when sprinkled with blood, were used for God's service. And we, when thus sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ, are "vessels of honour meet for the Master's use" (2 Tim. ii. 21).

While this cleansing then is God's act, faith in the Saviour is our acceptance of it. Let us beware, therefore, of unbelief. "I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged" (Ezek. xxiv. 13), are words of terrible import. They speak of a cleansing which yet is no cleansing—of the grace of God received in vain (2 Cor. vi. 1)—of the counsel of God rejected against ourselves (Luke vii. 30). "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. ii. 21), "every one" therefore "that exalteth himself shall be abased. But he that humbleth himself shall be exalted: God be merciful to me a sinner" is the way to everlasting life (Luke xviii. 13, 14).

SIXTH SUNDAY.

God's Appreciation of Service.

2 SAMUEL VII. 19.

"Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?"

EMINENT Hebrew scholars say that these words ought to be rendered, "Is this the manner of the man who is the Lord Jehovah?" For the Prophet had just told David that "of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh," God "would raise up Christ to sit on his throne,"—that He would be His Father and own Him for a Son,—that He would never take His mercy from Him, but establish His kingdom for ever. And the devout monarch, filled with adoring wonder as he contemplated the glorious Person of whom the Prophet had spoken—his Son, and yet the Son of God, asked, "Is this the manner of the man" who, though a man, is yet the Lord Jehovah?

Another, and perhaps a more profitable, inter-

pretation lies on the face of the plain English words before us.

God had done everything for David. He had chosen him when a shepherd-boy, had preserved him from the malice and violence of Saul, had given him the throne of Judah and of Israel, had put all his enemies under the soles of his feet. And David, sitting in his house of cedar, and contemplating all this abundant goodness, had asked, What can I do in return for my Heavenly, my Almighty Benefactor? His Ark is without a resting-place, I will build Him an house. The Prophet Nathan had forbidden this in God's name. But so highly did God appreciate the purpose of His servant's heart, that Nathan brought with him the assurance that God would build David an house. His sons after him should sit on the throne of Israel; and, finally, Messiah himself, *the Son of God*, should come as *the Son of David* to bless a longing world.

It was this which overwhelmed the pious monarch. He "went in and sat before the Lord," exclaiming, Was ever loving-kindness, was ever grace like Thine? Man is slow to acknowledge

a benefit, and slower to return it. Why shouldest Thou acknowledge the little service I thought of rendering, why shouldest Thou recompense it with such a reward? It is not "the manner of man, O Lord God!"

We have to do with David's God. And as He dealt with David, so will He deal with us. A cup of cold water given for His sake shall not lose its reward. And when the Great Day shall come, and we find our smallest services brought up for recompense, the language of our hearts shall be that of David before us, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" "When saw we Thee an hungered and fed Thee, or thirsty and gave Thee drink, or naked and clothed Thee, or sick and visited Thee?" If we thought of this now, we should not allow so many opportunities of serving God to pass by us. What we call gratitude in man has its fountain and source in Deity. The Blessed God is the most grateful Being in His Universe; He never forgets a service. "But he who soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully."

We are indeed unprofitable servants; we never can *deserve* anything. It matters not. So was David, and never was any one more profoundly conscious of it. He thought the house he proposed to build the very least he could do for God's name; he was ashamed to have it noticed. But what he thought *little*, God thought *much*. Love always *underrates* the services it renders; it is love's nature. But the same love *overrates* the services rendered to it. The affectionate daughter spends herself by the father's dying bed, feeling *all I do is too little*. The dying father blesses the child—*How unwearied your solicitude, how constant your love and care!* Let us learn to serve our Heavenly Father in this self-renouncing spirit of adoption; we and our services shall be remembered of Him in the blessed ages to come.

SEVENTH SUNDAY.

The Hope of Resurrection.

JOB XIV. 14.

"All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come."

THE "appointed time" here spoken of is generally understood as the time of this mortal life; the "change" anticipated as that death which God has appointed for every man; "Thou changest his countenance and sendest him away." It becomes us to leave ourselves in the hands of Him who made us, to do His will or to bear it so long as it shall please Him that this mortal life continue, and when the solemn hour of death shall come, meekly to bow to His decree. And to many, these words of the Patriarch before us convey this expression of faith and resignation.

The context does not appear to bear out this interpretation. The whole passage refers to

resurrection, and is one among many Scriptural proofs that "the old fathers did not look for transitory promises." The chapter commences with a lamentation over human frailty and mortality. "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, it will sprout again; but man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? He lieth down and riseth not; till the heavens be no more, he shall not wake." Shall he ever wake—"if a man die, shall he live again?" Here is the question of questions on which all depends. It was so especially in that early dawn of the world, when "life and immortality" were not yet "*brought to light* by the Gospel." But this question admitted even then of a reply. "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee." Here is the call of Psalm xc., "Come again, ye children of men;" of Isaiah xxvi., "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust;" of John v., "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God;" of 1 Corinthians xv., "The trumpet shall sound." And to that call there shall be an answer. "They that hear" it "shall live." They shall come again from the dust in which they have been dwelling, to sing God's

praise; "the dead shall be raised incorruptible." The Patriarch saw all this afar off, and was persuaded of it, and embraced it as a personal hope; "in my flesh," he tells us elsewhere, "I shall see God."

The context tells us also why these things shall be, why it is that the blessed God will call on the dead to come again. A Creator's affection yearns over them; "Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine own hands." I am small and despised, the Patriarch would say, I am hasting to the grave, and worms shall soon destroy this body. But even when laid there, Thou wilt remember that "Thy hands made and fashioned me," Thou wilt desire to see me a living man once more. And I shall be so; at Thy command my earthly framework shall be re-edified, and bone come again to His bone. When Thou shalt "stand on the earth in the latter day," Thou wilt *change* this vile body and fashion it like Thine own.

When shall this change come? I know not, the Patriarch replies, but I am content to wait for it "all the days of my appointed time." Faith

and Hope then express themselves in prayer. "Hide me in the grave," he says, "keep me secret till Thy wrath be past," and the day of peace and glory come—"*appoint me a set time and remember* me—then Thou shall call and I will answer." How beautiful is all this! The child lying down to rest asks the parent to remember him in the morning, and call him at the appointed time. And when the Sun casts his glad beams over the earth, and all nature is awakening to joy, the father undraws the curtains and bids his child arise. So shall it be with the Blessed God and His children in the glad resurrection-morning. He will *remember to call them* at the "time appointed," and at His well-known voice they shall awake to sleep no more. My flesh shall rest, says the Patriarch, in hope of this blessed consummation, all the days of my appointed time.

How reproving to us is this early faith and hope! May God give us grace to follow them!

EIGHTH SUNDAY.

Guilelessness.

PSALM XXXII. 2.

"And in whose spirit there is no guile."

THIS stands connected with the blessedness of the forgiveness of iniquity, and the covering of sin. They are the portion of those who are guileless in their dealings with God.

What, then, are we to understand by *guile?* —what by *guilelessness?*

All attempts to palliate sin while we confess it to God, are guile. Such was the reply of our first father when charged with the first disobedience: "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree." Such too was the reply of our first mother: "The Serpent beguiled me." Such is often our reply: "We have done wrong, but there is much to be said, there are many extenuating circumstances."

Let us not think, while we speak thus, that we shall obtain any mercy of the Lord. God will not cover the sin which we take pains to hide.

Guilelessness is ingenuous and full confession. We have it before us in the context. "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid; I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." Such confession is the direct and immediate road to mercy; "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." God covers the offence which in filial sorrow and brokenness of heart we spread out before Him.

All confession of sin supposes a resolution to forsake it. Such a resolution may be partial, it may lack completeness and sincerity. This also is guile. And let us not think while we cherish it, that we shall obtain any mercy from God. David acknowledged his sin in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. And with the acknowledgment came the prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." It might have been otherwise. He might have desired to keep his evil inclinations, and purposed to gratify them again when an opportunity should present itself.

He never in such a case would have had addressed to him the cheering words, "The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die." The mercy of God is not an impunity to sin; "There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared" (Psalm cxxx. 4).

Guilelessness is a sincere and honest purpose to cease from all that displeases God. It is an effort in all things to please Him; we desire only to know His will. And He does not leave us ignorant. "I will instruct thee and teach thee" is the promise of the context, "I will guide thee with mine eye." We cease to be "like the horse and the mule which have no understanding," restrained from evil by providential checks or coerced by fear; our obedience becomes that of the child delighting in the will of the father. The guileless receive such grace at the hand of a forgiving God. It brings with it peace now; its end is everlasting life.

Are we guileless then in our dealings with God? How is it with our sin, past and present? Are we ever making ingenuous confession of it, are we spreading it out without concealment

before Him who is the Fountain of Mercy? And how with our desires for the future? With all our consciousness of sin and miserable shortcoming, is it our hearts' most earnest longing to be delivered from all that is evil, and enabled for all that is good? It shall not be in vain. Forgiving mercy waits on us, and grace to help us in every time of need. This goodness shall follow us all the days of our life, and prepare us for the vision of the Gracious One in His own house for ever. Oh who shall speak of the blessedness of that eternal Home, where God's loving and obedient children shall be gathered round their Father!

"We speak of the realms of the blest,
That region so bright and so fair;
And oft are its glories confest,
But what must it be to be there!"

The Lord make us of those guileless ones whom He is preparing for its endless felicities!

NINTH SUNDAY.

Christ made Sin for us.

PSALM XL. 12.

"Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me."

THE Psalm in which these words occur is familiarly quoted by St. Paul (Hebrews x. 5–9), as containing the sayings of Messiah. Can *these words* then be His—is there any sense in which He could say "Mine iniquities . . . . are more than the hairs of mine head"?

There is a sense, a most important and a most blessed one.

The possessive pronoun *mine* is not always confined to the person of the speaker. Such is the mysterious unity of the family that its interests, joys, and sorrows are all one. If one member is unhappily guilty of a trespass against the law of morals, every other member feels

as if the deed were his own. The father, the brother, the sister, all say, *my shame.* They have committed no personal trespass, but they are one with the miserable offender. We bid them not be ashamed, and remind them that they are personally guiltless. Our words are vain and touch the surface only; the blood rushing to the cheek whenever the offence is mentioned, tells the feeling of the heart within.

Now the unity of the family is only a faint adumbration of the unity of Christ with the great family of man. This unity is, in fact, the foundation on which all our hopes repose. HE "WAS MADE MAN." Man's sorrows were therefore His, "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. viii. 17). Not that He was ever sick, health went forth from His very garments. But the sufferings of others pressed upon His spirit as His own. "When they were sick," He tells us, "my clothing was sackcloth: I behaved myself as if he had been my friend or brother, I bowed down heavily" (Psalm xxxv. 13, 14). Man's sins too were His. "His own-self bare our sins in His own body on the tree"

(1 Peter ii. 24). He bare them on His heart also, confessing and mourning for them as if He had been personally guilty. The words before us are simply the natural language in which such bearing of sin expressed itself. He says "mine iniquities," He felt them to be His. They took hold of Him with a terrible power. When He came into the Father's holy presence, He remembered that He was a man, and that man was a transgressor, and the thought oppressed Him, He was "not able to look up." Again, the multitude of man's offences came before Him, they were "more than the hairs of His head," His heart failed Him. Therefore it was He longed for the Cross—for the arrival of that dread but blessed hour when He should put away this load of guilt and make peace between God and man. This throws a flood of wondrous light on the former part of the Psalm. We cannot wonder that He who so speaks of Sin's intolerable burden, should also be found saying, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."

He took what was ours, that we might take what is His. Let us follow His example then.

If He says of our demerits, "mine iniquities," let us say of His merits, "our obedience." If the remembrance of man's unworthiness made Him afraid to look up, let us men remember His worthiness and lift our heads with joy. If the number and aggravation of our offences made His heart to fail, let His many acts of righteousness, which are unto God a sweet savour of rest, fill our hearts with peace. This is the practical use of such a Scripture. It is the germ and anticipation of New Testament teaching—of "Him made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21).

TENTH SUNDAY.

Pardon and Vengeance.

PSALM XCIX. 8.

"Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God: Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions."

HERE is at once pardon and punishment; pardon manifested in prayer answered; vengeance taken by a pardoning God of the very sins which He forgave. The inconsistency is only apparent; if we understand the Divine character, we shall have no difficulty in harmonising these actings of the one God.

The Psalm refers to the worthies of Old Testament times. They were the suppliants whom God answered, whose God He avouched Himself to be, whose sins He forgave, whose inventions He punished. Let us refer to His dealings with one of that favoured company, the royal Psalmist David. All the world has heard

of his sin in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. God said to this convicted adulterer and murderer, "thou shalt not die." These words (with reverence we utter it) were spoken at the peril of the Divine character and name. Had no other words been spoken, had no Divine acting followed, God would have come before His people, before the world, before all generations following, as the Patron of iniquity, the Friend of sin. The death of David's child, the sword afflicting his house, his wives given to his neighbour, himself driven from his throne, were therefore immediately prophesied. And they came immediately to pass. When "David fasted and lay all night upon the earth"—when he passed through that week of agony till on the seventh day the child died—when he wept over his first-born Amnon slain by a brother's sword—when he fled before the face and then mourned over the death of Absalom (2 Sam. xi.-xviii.), he learned the lesson of the words before us. *A forgiving God took vengeance on the sin which He forgave.* He forgave because He was gracious; He punished because He was just. Had He not forgiven,

David had been destroyed before Him. As it was, the offender lived, but lived a chastened man.

This double truth—*forgiveness and yet vengeance*—is the lesson of the Cross of Christ. If the world lieth in the Wicked One, and "God has so loved the world" as to give "His only-begotten Son," we need no other proof that He is a God that forgives. Such a gift is itself forgiveness. And this forgiveness reaches to "all manner of sin and blasphemy," every form of iniquity and transgression. The Holy One is thus linked with the impure, the sinful creature. How does He then disengage Himself? How does He show that He is sin's everlasting Enemy? The Cross was His vengeance on sin. On that Cross the Holy One Himself died, bearing the iniquity which He forgave, in His own body, on the tree. Vengeance on man's inventions, is the lesson of the Cross. "Oh, my Father," said the Sufferer, "let this cup pass." It could not pass, because man had sinned. Love to man's person is also its lesson, the love of the Holy One and the Pure. The God of the Cross is the God of the words

before us—a God who forgives, and answers, and loads with blessing; a God who will not, cannot clear the guilty.

With this God we have to do. Let us understand that we are condemned before Him, condemned by the purity of His most righteous law. That law knows no forgiveness, lest God's holy name be compromised, lest He appear to encourage sin. Nevertheless He does forgive, because the Son of His love has died. His name is safe now, safe for 'ever. The Cross has made it safe. We may be cheered now by His eternal smile, and make His bosom our eternal hiding-place. Let us "seek the Lord while He may be found," and "call upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah lv. 6).

ELEVENTH SUNDAY.

Our Lord's Passover Hymn.

PSALM CXVIII. 27.

"God is the Lord, who hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar."

THE seven Psalms, beginning with the 112th and ending with the 118th, were the Great Hallel or Passover Hymn. It was sung annually at that sacred feast. The devout Israelite began, "Praise ye the Lord, blessed is the man that feareth the Lord." He sang of the God of Israel as the living and true God, whilst the idols of the heathen were silver and gold. He sang of His goodness to His people and of the love which was due to His name. He celebrated the Exodus from Egypt, and their deliverance from the hands of their enemies on every side. He ended with the blessed and consoling announcement, "His mercy endureth for ever."

From the days of Joshua downwards, through

the 1500 years that the Economy of Moses lasted, by how many sainted voices was this Great Hallel chanted! Judges and Warriors, Kings and Prophets esteemed it their highest distinction to be allowed to bear a part. Among these worshipping Passover-Companies, we recognise, through the dim distance of ages, the venerable forms of Caleb and Samuel, David and Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah. At length a nobler worshipper appeared, the Son of God. A nobler worshipper, but a worshipper still. He refused not to do what His servants had done, He kept the Passover. Nor was the Great Hallel absent from the sacred feast. Of His last Passover with His disciples we are told expressly, "when they had sung an Hymn (when they had hymned, *Greek*), they went out into the Mount of Olives" (Matt. xxvi. 30).

This does indeed impart unspeakable interest to the words before us. They form the concluding stanza of the Hymn sung by the Saviour just before His passion. Let us strive to realize what is at once so solemn and so blessed. In the centre of the Table in the Upper Room stands

the Lord Jesus. His disciples are stupefied with sorrow, and can scarcely sing for sadness: His own sacred voice at once raises and sustains the melody. "Praise ye the Lord," He begins, and looks around Him. "I love the Lord," He continues, "He hath heard my voice;" "give thanks to the Lord, for He is good." At length the strain draws to a close—"God is the Lord, who hath showed us light;" "let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God." Then stretching forth His hands in the midst of them as God's appointed Passover-lamb, "Bind ye the sacrifice with cords," He exclaims, "even to the horns of the altar." Words announcing the ready, the more than willing Sufferer! Words worthy of Him who had just declared to these sorrowing ones, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Worthy also of Him who said immediately after, as He led the way to dark Gethsemane, "That the world may know that I love the Father. Arise, let us go hence" (John xiv. 31).

Precious moments to these favoured disciples, and to be remembered through eternity! They

had united in worship with the Everlasting Son of the Father! But the same felicity is in reserve for all the redeemed. The day is coming when "the Son also Himself shall be subject to Him who put all things under Him" (1 Cor. xv. 28),—when the Lord Jesus, albeit surrounded by the glories of Deity, shall appear as a worshipper for ever. And in that worship His people shall share. "They sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (Rev. xv. 3). And the Lamb Himself is with them, as His own words bear witness—"In the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee" (Heb. ii. 12). Blessed hope! Let us learn in this day of trial and sorrow to join with Christ in prayer, desiring what He desires and asking for the things which are precious in His sight. In the day of glory and joy we shall unite with Him in praise for ever.

TWELFTH SUNDAY.

Perfect Peace.

ISAIAH XXVI. 3.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

PEACE comes from a mind stayed on God. And because God is the creature's all-sufficient Stay, it is "perfect peace." To look elsewhere than to Him either for the past or the future, is to have no peace. Let us look to the past; what is the terrible retrospect? We were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin. We have gone astray ever since we were born; we have sinned every day of our lives and come short of the glory of God; we are sinning, alas, to this hour. The law proclaims the sinner accursed, it warns us of the judgment-seat and of the wrath to come. The retrospect of the past is thus a retrospect of despair. But let us turn our thoughts to God. "In this," says the blessed

Gospel, "was manifested His love toward us; He sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him" (1 John iv. 9). Our sins then have not prevailed to turn this love away. That only-begotten One, says the same blessed Record, "appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix. 26). The middle wall of partition then between us and our God is broken down; we may seek Him, for He may be found; we may call upon Him, for He is near. "Through this man," again proclaims the Gospel, "is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts xiii. 38). Here is our boldness to seek God's face, our encouragement to call upon His name. It is the name of a Father; "when ye pray," says the Lord Jesus, "say Our Father" (Luke xi. 2). For He who has loved us so well, who has provided a sacrifice for our sins, and forgiveness in the blood of that sacrifice, has surely earned the name. To know this name is peace; to trust in Him to whom it belongs is "perfect peace;" to stay the mind on Him habitually and continually is to be kept in perfect peace. The

past cannot affright when seen in the light of Calvary.

We need peace for the future also. As we look into it, our hearts fail us. Some temptation may assail us which we may not have strength to meet; some trial or affliction which we may not be able to bear. There is one trial which will certainly come upon us, "the hour of death." We shall lie down on that bed from which we shall rise no more; and amidst its bodily agonies and mental conflicts, how shall our hearts endure, how shall our hands be strong? And after the hour of death, there is "the day of judgment;" we know that in His sight neither we nor any man living shall be justified. Let us turn in our fearfulness to Him whom Calvary reveals. He has provided for the past, He will provide for the future also; none shall be confounded that put their trust in Him. No temptation shall assail us which we have not strength to meet; His faithful love will not suffer it. There shall come no trial nor affliction which we are not able to bear; when we pass through the waters, He will be with us, and through the rivers, they

shall not overflow us. As for that hour which is overhung by the shadow of death, even it shall not affright. He is the Good Shepherd; His rod and staff shall be there. Judgment itself has no terrors for those who have made the Saviour their confidence. "For the Father judgeth no man." "Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us," is the Judge (John v. 22, Titus ii. 13, 14). "Within a little shall His wrath blaze forth," but "blessed are all they that put their trust in Him" (Psalm ii. 12, Horsley). For "He knoweth them that trust in Him" (Nah. i. 7), and will be found in that dread hour, their "Good Lord" to "deliver" them.

We have thus the secret of peace at once for the past and the future. The Cross has its retrospect and its prospect. It speaks of the past, telling us that our sins are borne, that the Lord Jesus bare them. It encourages for the future, bidding us leave all in His merciful hands. Many complain that they have no peace. It is because they trust in themselves. "Thou wilt keep him *in perfect peace*, whose mind is stayed *on Thee*."

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY.

"Thine own Flesh."

ISAIAH LVIII. 7.

"That thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh."

THE exhortation of the Prophet is to tender mercy and compassion. God's fast, He tells us, is to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, to deal out bread to the hungry, to bring the houseless poor to our dwelling, to cover the naked with a garment,—*not to hide ourselves from our own flesh.* These last words contain the reason of the preceding exhortation, and explain their own meaning. "God hath made of one blood, all nations of men on the face of all the earth" (Acts xvii. 26). Human flesh is therefore one, we are the members of one family, owning a common suffering nature. Not to hide ourselves from our own flesh, is to acknowledge that this is true. The negative has the force of a positive.

We are to seek out our neighbour in his sorrows, calamities, and distresses; we are to hasten to his help; the flesh which suffers in him is our own. The heavy burden which crushes him would crush us also. We are therefore to undo it and bid the poor child of oppression go free. We should faint if we wanted food, and shiver if exposed to the cold; we also feel the desolation of homelessness. Our neighbour therefore must not want food if we can give it to him, nor raiment if we possess the means of covering his naked body, nor the comfort of a home if our dwelling can receive him; he is our own flesh. He may be worthy, but his worth is not his plea. He may be unworthy, but his claim is not barred thereby. Worthy or unworthy, a sinner or a saint, he is our own flesh. We may not see him suffering and miserable, and pass by on the other side.

The Bible is a piece of perfect Mosaic—its doctrines and precepts intertwine. Its great doctrine is "the testimony of Jesus," how He came to seek that which was miserable and lost; how He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; how He made both

the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak; how, at last, He gave Himself for us, bearing our sins in His own body. He was obeying in all this the precept of the text before us, *not hiding Himself from His own flesh.* For the Son of God was made man. And by that wondrous act of Incarnation *our flesh* became *His own.* With that flesh He took its heritage of calamity and sorrow; our infirmities, our sicknesses became His. He compassionated the weeping widow at the gate of Nain; He healed the broken-hearted; He listened to the appeal of the poor distracted father whose son was afflicted by a foul spirit. It was the common heritage of sorrow; He knew too truly what tears, and a broken heart, and the buffetings of Satan were. And when He bore our sins, it was in *our body; our flesh* was the sacrifice which, "through the Eternal Spirit," was offered then "without spot unto God" (Heb. ix. 14).

What depths of consolation are here! The link which connects us with the Saviour is the one flesh. When the child of sorrow appeals to our mercy, we feel the reality of this connecting

link; it furnishes a plea which we are not able to disown. And we may be well assured that the perfect One, the exemplar of charity and compassion, will not be found disowning it. It is a plea for every man, for the harlot, the thief, the vilest of the vile. No amount of sin can destroy the link which connects us with the Lord Jesus. Let the lost, the miserable, appeal to His compassion, He will not hide Himself from His own flesh.

Out of this doctrine of Christ comes the precept of the text before us. And when the doctrine is received as life, there comes besides a heart disposed to the precept. He made every man's sorrow His; it becomes ours also. He made every man's sin His, confessing it, mourning for it, laying down His life to expiate it. And we also become in spirit sin-confessors, sin-bearers. The sinners are our own flesh; we cannot put their sins away from us.

May God of His mercy put such a spirit within us! Partakers in a Saviour's sorrow now, we shall another day partake in His eternal joy.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY.

St. John Baptist.

ST. MATTHEW XI. 11.

"Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he."

VERY high is the commendation here bestowed on St. John. And the privilege and high standing of those who are in the kingdom of heaven, is to be estimated accordingly. The least of them is greater than he who was the greatest of the sons of women. To be in the kingdom of heaven, is to believe the gospel of that kingdom and walk under its power. And he who does so, though his knowledge and attainments be the least and lowest, is greater than this distinguished prophet. Let us consider where this marked and striking difference lies. St. John the Baptist was an earnest and holy man. He

lived during the early part of his life far from the haunts of men, in the desert, alone with God. When he was manifested to Israel, he preached righteousness. He told the Pharisee of the vanity of formalism; he warned the Sadducee that his infidel creed could not save him. He besought the Publican to cease from extortion, and the Soldier to abstain from violence; he counselled the selfish to give freely of their superfluous food and raiment to their poorer brethren. When he was called to a royal court, his preaching was the same. Welcome or unwelcome, its burden was still *Righteousness.* At last he lost the prince's favour, and died the martyr of righteousness. Where, then, was his defect? Though he devoted his life to make men good, and died for the object to which that life was devoted, he did not know fully the secret of success. *The guilt of sin taken away by sacrifice, is the destruction of its moral power.* In these words lies the secret of the gospel; "our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. vi. 6). St. John did not live to see this, and therefore could

not preach it. He preached repentance and he baptized with water. He said "behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29), but the grave had closed over him before his words were fulfilled. They are fulfilled now, blessed be God's name! Sin is taken away in Christ's blood; a Father's full forgiveness is ours in that blood; the gift of the Holy Ghost is also ours in that blood. God's secret of righteousness is thus with us. It consists in these three things—*atoning blood—forgiving mercy—sanctifying grace*, each coming out of that which precedes it. Without these the most earnest of men may labour all his life to turn his fellows from sin and not succeed. But let a sense of forgiving mercy through atoning blood be poured by the Holy Ghost into the heart, sin is abandoned and men begin to serve God. Here was the Baptist's inferiority; his instruments were weak, and his heart-longings were never satisfied. The least of God's faithful ministers now has a power of dealing with the human heart and conscience never possessed by that first of prophets. And the least of God's people now has a power over

his own heart never possessed by that greatest of the sons of men. For the provisions of grace which to him were future only, are ours in possession. The great sacrifice was not slain in his day, nor the veil of the Temple rent, nor the spirit of adoption given, nor the Holy Ghost in His Pentecostal fulness poured into the hearts of men. The least of us is thus greater than he in standing and holy privilege. And yet, which of us will compare our hearts and lives with his? *Greater* and yet *less; superior* and yet *immeasurably inferior*—our privileges and opportunities ought to humble us deeply before God.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY.

The Two Rests.

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ST. MATTHEW XI. 27–30.

"Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest.* Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and *ye shall find rest* unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

HERE are two rests, but, like the two commandments of the law, they are kindred. The first rest is the knowledge of God; and the second rest is like unto it, the possession of the mind of Christ.

Behind the heavens and the waters that are above the heavens, behind external nature, behind all that man can see or discover, dwells the Invisible Creator. And within that infinite bosom there beats a Father's heart. But man does not know this gracious One. Conscience accuses man of sin, and he knows of none to for-

give that sin; he is perplexed, and there is none to guide; he is in sorrow, and there is none to console. Hence the sadness that is everywhere, hence the drooping heart, the heavy-laden spirit, the hands that hang down. "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." "All things are full of labour, man cannot utter it." There is One who has known that Father from everlasting, who lay in His bosom before the worlds were. It is His to reveal Him to us the sons of men, to say to the heart and conscience, "My Father and *your Father*" (John xx. 17). Blessed revelation! It brings rest along with it. When the conscience accuses of guilt, we turn to Him for pardon; when in perplexity and darkness, we look to Him for guidance; when overwhelmed with grief, we seek to Him for consolation. This is the first rest—rest through the revelation of the Father, rest in the knowledge of God.

He who reveals that Father to us, knew Him from everlasting as the Object of His perfect love. He came into the world as a man because He loved Him. And when in the world, He ever

showed that love. He trusted in His holy name; He was obedient to His blessed will. This was His yoke, His burden; love made the yoke easy, it made the burden light. And He says, "Learn of Me." He would have us know Him whom He has known from eternal ages, that we may love Him also. He would have us trust, after His example, in that blessed and holy name. He would have us to say with Himself, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." He invites us to make trial of that yoke which He, the "meek and lowly in heart," ever felt as easy, to bow our shoulders to that burden which He ever felt it His highest privilege to bear. He assures us that in doing so, His experience shall be ours also—we shall find rest to our souls. This is the second rest—the rest of the meek and lowly mind, "the mind that was in Christ Jesus."

But how shall we attain this meek and lowly mind? It is the mind of sons, and we attain it by knowing the Father. His love revealed in the heart, produces its own likeness there; His mercy pacifies the conscience, and subdues the whole man before a forgiving God. Pride has

no longer its accustomed place, our soul becomes like a weaned child. The two rests are thus identical, they are the inseparable parts of one perfect and blessed whole. Love produced by knowledge of the Divine Benignity—Confidence the fruit of love—Obedience the fruit of both! There is no other rest for any Son of Man. It was the rest of THE SON OF GOD.

"Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (John xiv. 8), was the prayer of the first disciples. Let it be our prayer also! "No man knoweth the Father, save the Son." And his gracious invitation is, "Come unto Me." But let us observe His answer to that prayer as then addressed to Him. "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father" (verse 9). In His taking our flesh—in His living among us as a man—in His dying for our sins—in His rising again to bless us, God *the Father* is declared. We need only the opening of the eyes, the vision of *the things that are.* That glorious vision "sufficeth" for rest now, and is the earnest of life everlasting.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY.

Necessity of the Death of Jesus.

ST. MATTHEW XXVI. 54.

"But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus *it must be?*"

We have in these words, from the lips of the Lord Himself, the strongest possible testimony to the absolute necessity of His death. It was necessary that sin might be forgiven. For thus He speaks again, "My blood, shed for many, for the remission of sins" (Context *v.* 28).

This necessity of atonement before forgiveness occasions a difficulty to many. It seems vindictive in God, they say, to demand blood before He will pardon. We may be sheltered by His mercy, but we remember that it is bought with blood. And it fails to awaken in our hearts those feelings of affectionate confidence with which we desire to regard our Creator.

This objection is often disposed of by a

reference to the authority of the Bible. Such reference is not enough. It silences *the expression* of the difficulty, but leaves the difficulty itself to do its work in the mind. The Bible must be explained.

Nothing can be more opposite than *vindictiveness* and *law*. The North American Indian driving the spear through his flying enemy, and tearing off his bloody scalp, exhibits vindictiveness in its genuine character. It comes of malice; its pleasure is in another's pain, its solace in his misery. That feeling in the English heart which demands the death of a murderer, has nothing vindictive in it. It has no pleasure in his pain, it finds no solace in his misery. It is a moral feeling, and LAW is its expression. Law pronounces the murderer's doom, and the English heart sympathising with law, is satisfied when its behests are executed.

"In the image of God, made He man." Law is the expression of the mind of God. Not favouritism but law demands that the righteous be rewarded; not vindictiveness but law demands that the transgressor die. When the Lord Jesus

was obedient unto death, law demanded for Him a name above every name; when the same Lord Jesus appeared the representative of the guilty, the same law demanded that He should die the death.

These demands of law are for the protection at once of the Creator's honour, and the creature's most sacred interests. Were it possible for righteousness to remain unrewarded and sin to abide unpunished, the honour of God's name would be compromised, and all intelligent confidence in Him as the Moral Ruler of the Universe destroyed. The real meaning of atonement is, that He who can do all things, cannot sacrifice His name. It is in His heart to pardon sin, but He must first acquit Himself and that entirely from all possible collusion with it. Therefore it was that the Lord Jesus died. Sin by His death was declared for ever accursed; God was proclaimed its everlasting Enemy. In His exaltation moreover, God was revealed the Friend and Rewarder of righteousness — of righteousness alone. The word of forgiveness now comes forth, for the name of the Forgiver is safe. His love has found

a righteous channel, and through that channel it flows freely to bless the sons of men. So far then from dishonouring God, it is His highest glory that "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). Blood-Shedding is the fulfilment of law. Remission without Blood-Shedding would be the setting aside of law. But to set law aside, is to set God aside; such a pardon could never give peace or draw the heart to Him. Remission through the magnifying of law, pacifies the conscience; we feel it to be, from its very nature, secure and everlasting. And when we see that God's love has put itself to cost to procure it for us, it appeals to the heart also; we learn to love Him who has first loved us.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY.

Our Claim on a Heavenly Father.

ST. LUKE XI. 13.

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

THE things here contrasted are the parentage of earth and that of heaven; the claim of the former and the greater claim of the latter. *A parent* is an author of being; *a child,* one who has received being. Hence the claim of the parent on the child; of the child on the parent. If a child ask bread, it is a crime to give him a stone; if he ask a fish, it is a crime to give him a serpent; if he ask an egg, it is a crime to offer him a scorpion. Nor is it a crime to offer him evil things only; it is a crime to refuse him good things. Bread is a good thing, he ought to have it; he ought to have all else which he asks, which is needful for his welfare and comfort.

The parent ought to bestow them. He gave the child his being, and ought to give along with it all that makes it a happiness, a source of joy. Failing in this first of parental duties, he deserves not the parent's name.

If these things are true of the fathers of earth, much more are they true of *the Father who is in Heaven.* This is the literal rendering of the original, and it is most expressive. It brings God before us as the real author of our being; earthly parents are but instruments. And it shews us our wondrous claim on His love and continual remembrance. He cannot send us evil things when we ask for good; the love which gave us our being will not permit Him so to do. And the same love is our ample assurance that we shall receive from His hand all the good things which we ask. The Blessed God will not deny a claim which even man acknowledges.

The parallel scripture in St. Matthew brings this before us in the plainest manner, for it reports our Lord's words, "how much more shall your Heavenly Father give *good things* to them that ask Him?" And if we ask what good things are, St.

Luke's words are our emphatic answer, "the Holy Spirit." God made us for eternal life. But we lie by nature in the ruins of the fall, the conscience asleep, the heart hardened, the whole being alienated from God. If we continue thus, we lose our souls; and were we to gain the whole world, never should be possessed of anything which deserves to be called *good.* Eternal life is emphatically *the good thing.* That secured, all things are good, for "all things work together for good to them that love God." That lost, nothing is good, existence is a gigantic failure. It is by arousing our consciences by His Holy Spirit, softening our hearts by His grace, pouring into them the treasure of the secret of His love, and filling us with the spirit of adoption, that God makes us partakers of this everlasting good. For this is life, the earnest of eternal life.

Some may be discouraged by this; God, they may say, is not working thus in our hearts. Let them be cheered then by the words before us, they bid us ask Him to do so, and assure us that we shall be heard. He gave us this being, and designed what He gave to be a boon. He knows

that His Holy Spirit is needful to make it so, and it is not in His heart to refuse us that good thing. Let us ask Him to arouse our consciences, to touch our hearts, to draw our affections after Him, to teach us to cry, "Abba, Father." It is recorded in the life of the excellent Bishop Wilson of Calcutta, that when a young man and utterly careless, he was exhorted by a companion to think of his everlasting interests. "I have no religious feelings," said Wilson, "and I cannot create them; what then am I to do?" "Pray for such feelings," was the prompt reply. He did pray, and a long life of consistent piety and eminent usefulness is the signal testimony how fully he was heard. What a striking verification was this of the promise of the Saviour before us! Let us pray in like manner. There is One above who will hear us also, who is able both to begin a good work in us, and to perform it till the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. i. 6).

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY.

Children of the Resurrection.

ST. LUKE XX. 36.

"Neither can they die any more, for .... they are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

THESE are remarkable words, pregnant of meaning and full of unspeakable consolation.

To BE a child *of the resurrection* is to be a child *of God.* There is perfect unity in nature between the life of the father and the child. It is maintained in both, by the breath of the nostrils. It is nourished by the same food, refreshed by the same sleep, subject to the same accidents, and destined to yield at last to the same decay and dissolution. Take away this unity, and real paternity is at an end; *a father* is one who has communicated *his own life* to another. The same holds true of the Blessed God. If then we had no life

but that of the flesh, we could not say, "Our Father which art in Heaven." For our natural life is not God's life. He is the Holy One, and we are unholy. He is the Immortal One, and we who came of yesterday are also gone to-morrow. Dust shall then return to dust in the cold and silent grave. But out of that sad and gloomy resting-place another life shall come, the life of resurrection. It is indeed God's life. The spirit, re-united to the body, shall be pure as He is pure. That body and spirit moreover shall never more be separated; "neither can they die any more," is the assurance of the Lord Jesus. For God cannot die, and the life that is of Him is as immortal as Himself.

This is what it is to be God's children in the full meaning of that blessed word. It is to have God's life in us, that life which knows no sin, that life which cannot see death. The resurrection of the just is therefore called by the holy Apostle, "the day of *the manifestation of the sons of God*" (Rom. viii. 19).

To BE a child *of God*, is to be a child *of the resurrection*. The principle of purity and

immortality of which we have spoken, does not tarry for the day of glory, though its full development is then. Its beginnings are now, "this *is* life eternal, that they might know Thee" (John xvii. 3). The heart which has known God's love, which has learned to love Him again, to trust in His faithfulness and delight in His will, has found this principle of purity. And what is pure, is immortal; for the pure is of God, and what is of God cannot die. It is His own image, His own life by the breathing of His own Spirit. It shall survive the malice of the devil, the seductions of the world and the flesh, the changes and chances of time, death itself and the grave. Indestructible like Him from whom it proceeds, it shall come forth from that last resting-place, and arrayed in unfading beauty, bloom in the paradise of God. "He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken our mortal bodies" (Rom. viii. 11). It was not possible that Jesus should be holden of death (Acts ii. 24). Nor is it possible that those should be holden of it, in whom the same life of God is found.

It is needless to point out the fulness of

consolation that is here. If God has led us to the knowledge of Himself, we have found a life which cannot die. It is hidden with God in Christ now (Col. iii. 3); an unbelieving world understands it not. And while this poor dust shall rest in the grave, and we and our doings are perhaps forgotten among men, it shall be hidden again in the disembodied state for a time. But let us be of good cheer; it shall re-appear and be acknowledged in the glorious resurrection-morning. God shall then be manifested as our Father, and we as His children for ever.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY.

The God of the Living.

ST. LUKE XX. 37, 38.

"Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the Bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him."

THE Resurrection of the dead is the great hope of Christianity. "If the dead rise not," says St. Paul, "then is not Christ raised. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain" (1 Cor. xv. 16, 17). But it is not the hope of Christianity alone; it is the hope of Revelation. "*Even Moses*," the earliest of the sacred penmen, "shewed it at the Bush."

These words of our Lord were spoken in reply to the Sadducees. They were materialists, denying all spiritual existence. They also denied the resurrection of the flesh (Acts xxiii. 8). As an answer to their first error, this citation from

Exodus was decisive. Between the death of Abraham and God's appearance to Moses at the Bush, there intervened a period of at least 300 years. And yet at the close of that period, God spake of him as a living person; as one with whom He had personal relations; one who loved Him and was loved by Him; the object of His blessing and His care. Spiritual existence was thus demonstrated, and materialism utterly condemned. The dust of Abraham was, all this while, lying in the Cave of Macpelah. It is not however, at first sight so easy to see how this language of Moses confutes the second error of the Sadducees, and proves the Resurrection of the dead. These patriarchs were alive in the Divine bosom when God spake to Moses at the Bush. They were blessed there. Why might not this blessedness have been everlasting? Would not this have satisfied the words, "the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob," without any Resurrection of the dead?

The true answer to this discloses a most blessed truth—the truth which at this moment our Lord Jesus meant to shew. *A spirit is not a*

man. Man is a compound being, "of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting." *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob,* were human names—names of men. God called them by these names at the Bush, because He contemplated them as human beings. They had lain in the grave for hundreds of years, and were to lie there for thousands of years more. Nevertheless, before His eye "who quickeneth the dead and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. iv. 17), they appeared as men—in the integrity of man's condition — in the full possession at once of human and endless life. And how should this have been, asked our Lord of the discomfited Sadducees, if there were no Resurrection of the dead?

We thank the Sadducees for their captious question. It elicited this blessed answer. Let us take to ourselves the fulness of consolation which it offers. God said to Moses, "I know thee by name" (Exod. xxxiii. 12). It is His word to all who make His mercy their confidence —to us, if we have learned so to do. By what name does He thus know us? By our human

name—the name which designates us as men. He is our God *by name*, as He was the God of Abraham. Such gracious knowledge is the pledge, not of blessedness to the spirit only—the spirit is not the man—but to the body also. Our flesh shall decompose in the grave and be turned to dust, but it cannot abide as dust. "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." We shall yet appear before Him in the integrity of our human condition, *answering to our names* when He calls us at the last day. Let this blessed hope constrain us now to purify ourselves "as He is pure" (1 John iii. 3). We shall not be "ashamed before Him at His coming" (ii. 28); we shall answer to His call when He summons His own around Him; in body as in spirit we shall serve our God for ever!

TWENTIETH SUNDAY.

The True Light.

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ST. JOHN I. 9.

"That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

THE other Gospels open with our Lord's life in flesh; that of St. John alone with His eternal pre-existence and His life in glory. He was in the beginning with God, yea, He was God. All things were made by Him. The world was made by Him, though it knew Him not when He came. He was the Covenant-God of Israel, though "His own" people, Abraham's seed, received Him not. And when He "was made Flesh and dwelt among" the sons of men, it was only the revelation of what had eternally been.

Connected with these declarations are the words before us. Their meaning plainly is, *all the light that has been in the world has been derived from the Son of God.* The apostle had to do at

once with Jew and Greek. We have had grace and truth, said the unbelieving Jew, ever since the days of Moses. Yes, answers St. John, but while "the law was given by Moses," that "grace and truth" have come all along "through Jesus Christ." We had light in the world, said the scornful Greek, before your Messiah appeared. You had, answers St. John, but it was derived from Him. What your Socrates and Plato taught was but an emanation of "the true light." And that light has now arisen on a benighted world, that you and all men may believe and live.

The truth that was in the Gentile world, is thus traced to its source. And its scattered rays converge to one point, "Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Let us take an example of this from the teaching of Socrates. His leading moral maxim was that *happiness consisted in being good.* The whole current of his age was against him; they placed happiness in external things—wealth, luxury, and ease. "What," they asked scornfully, "is not the king of Persians then happy?" "No," answered the undaunted sage, "unless he is good."

Such teaching was light, a ray from "the true Light." But it was a scattered and broken ray, unable to guide to salvation. To be made really good, man must know God. And Socrates could not reveal God.

When the Son of God came into the world, He did not extinguish nor did He disown the light which He had sent before Him. *He also* taught that happiness consisted in being good. But He did more, He revealed *the Good One* that man might be made good. His life spent in works of mercy and in "healing all that were oppressed of the Devil," made God known as man's friend, a friend sympathising with his sorrows, and ready to aid him in every trouble and extremity. While His death for the taking away of sin, told the infinite love which God bore to the lost creature, and revealed Him as the merciful and gracious One, forgiving all iniquity and transgression. The Cross was thus the climax of Christ's revelation of the Father. And while it discovered the darkness that had been in the world before it, it gathered up the light. Rays, before scattered and broken, now shine from the

Cross with the brightness of perfect day. While proclaiming the eternal truth that goodness alone is "life and peace," it creates the goodness it commends. "Beholding" therein "as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image" (2 Cor. iii. 18). Our Father's love makes us loving, His mercy makes us pitiful and kind, His purity makes us pure. We are prepared for the inheritance of the sanctified, the everlasting bliss of His presence.

The question of Socrates to Xenophon, "Where are good men made?" is answered thus by Christianity alone. *They are made at the foot of the Cross.* Thither let us repair. A Father's name is written on it; let us read and believe. As we believe, we shall love; as we love, we shall obey. "OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN," is the great light that has come into the world, the lesson of everlasting life.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY.

Taking Away of Sin.

ST. JOHN I. 29.

"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

WE are told of a "middle wall of partition between" the Jew and the Gentile, and that our Lord Jesus broke it down (Ephes. ii. 14). That wall was mutual hatred. The Jew abhorred the Gentile as an uncircumcised alien, a dog. The Gentile repaid that abhorrence with the most intense contempt and loathing. The Son of God came, taking the flesh of both; He bare the sins of both; He rose again to bless both. And when Jew and Gentile believed in His common love, they began to love each other. "It pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia," we read (Rom. xv. 26), "to make a certain contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem." "I came," says St. Paul, referring to it (Acts xxiv. 17), "bringing alms to

my nation and offerings." These alms and offerings were the expressions of Gentile love. The wall of partition was gone, not one stone of it was left upon another.

Sin was a wall of partition between God and man. There was indeed no *mutual* hatred. But the law of God, on the one part, forbad the sinner's approach; the sinner, on the other part, was an enemy in his mind and by wicked works to Him who had ordained that law. The Son of God took the common flesh of all men; in that flesh He fulfilled the law's righteousness; in the same flesh He bore the law's curse. Man is shut out from God no longer; satisfied, nay glorified, in the work of the Lord Jesus, God invites, nay beseeches, His poor alien to return. This is the meaning of the words before us. The sin of *the world* is thus indeed taken away; the bosom of Eternal Mercy is open to all flesh.

But as in the case of the Jew and Gentile, so again between God and man. When God's invitation reaches the human heart, and His love is really believed, then, and then only, is reconciliation, *at-one-ment*, perfected. It is thus that faith

saves. Distrust and alienation give way before it, and man is *at one* with his God.

Sin taken away by Sacrifice, the subject of the Baptist's preaching, is simply God's part of the work. That preaching was "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" (Mark i. 1). GOD ACCESSIBLE, *that whosoever will, may come to Him*, is therefore the very essence of that gospel. It is to be preached "to faith" (Rom. i. 17), *i.e.* that men may believe it. He that believeth it hath everlasting life. "*This is life* . . . that they might know Thee" (John xvii. 3).

Some ask with disappointment, is this all? Does the gospel tell us only that God is accessible? That is nothing. Let us rather say, it is everything. If God invites us to come to Him, His thoughts towards us must be thoughts of peace. There is an old saying, "a king's face should give grace." And even our cruel Henry VIII. found fault with a brother monarch, for admitting a petitioner into his presence and refusing his suit, alleging this saying against him. The heart of James II. is said to have been as hard as marble. And the proof which all history has

given of this, is his admitting his unfortunate nephew into his presence and denying his prayer for life. The great Napoleon was at least more wise. When the unhappy Duke d'Enghien implored that he might see him—"no," was the reply, "if he sees me, he must live, and I have resolved that he shall die." Shall hard man judge thus, and shall the Blessed God be less tender? No; He does not ask us to come to Him, designing to slay us. The invitation alone is a pledge that we shall not die, but live.

But on such a theme human illustrations are idle; they cannot reach the deep, the blessed reality. It costs a monarch but a word of his mouth to bid a petitioner draw near. It cost the blessed God the blood of His dear Son to bid us come to Him. Sin taken away by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, tells not of access only, but of Him who has ordained that access. His love toward us is strong as death. If He loves us so well, and if that love invites us to draw near, surely we need no other gospel. It is "glad tidings of great joy."

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY.

The Good Shepherd.

ST. JOHN X. 14, 15.

"I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep."

As these verses stand in our authorised translation, their connecting link is wanting, and their meaning is in consequence obscured. They ought to be rendered, "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine, *even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father*, and I lay down my life for the sheep."* Here indeed is fulness of meaning and consolation too. The Shepherd knows His sheep as the Father knew Him: the sheep know their Shepherd as that Shepherd knew the Father. What does the Shepherd know of the sheep? He knows their weakness and need of strength; their temptations

* Revised Version.

and need of succour; their sorrows and need of consolation; their perplexities and need of guidance. Thus the Father knew Him. For the sake of the flock He was to feed and guide and save, *He Himself became a lamb.* The Father was His Shepherd. He knew Him in the hour of weakness, in the season of temptation, in the dark night of sorrow, in the time of difficulty, perplexity, and danger. The very depths of the tried and sorrowing heart were before Him; He poured into it the balm of Divine consolation, and ministered heavenly succour according to its need. And even so the Lamb of God, exalted now as the Great Shepherd, knows His sheep. The one knowledge is the measure of the other. As perfectly and entirely as the Father knew Jesus, so perfectly, so entirely, Jesus knows us His people.

The second declaration is but the echo of the first. The sheep know their Shepherd as that Shepherd knew the Father. Would we understand how He knew the Father, let us turn to the Book of Psalms. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made

me afraid; in my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God" (Psa. xviii. 6). "Plead, Lord," he said in that hour of darkness, "with them that plead with me, fight against those that fight against me" (xxxv. 1). "The enemy crieth so, and the ungodly cometh on so fast, for they are minded to do some mischief, so maliciously are they set against me" (lv. 3, *P. B. v.*). Jesus Himself tells us what He found the Father then—"my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I trust" (xviii. 1). Thus we must know Him, our Light in darkness, our Comforter in sorrow, our Guide in perplexity, our Refuge and Shield in danger. He is all to us now that the Father was once to Him. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me even he shall live by me" (John vi. 47). And thus, though it is to Him we look, He is our Example in looking. We look to the Shepherd of Israel; our Example is "the Lamb of God."

But how vast, it may be said, is the difference between us and Christ! He was the Father's Holy One in whom He was ever well-pleased,

the possessor of His love from everlasting to everlasting. However disastrous His outward circumstances, however deep the darkness that surrounded Him, He knew that He could never be forsaken, could never look up in vain. We are poor, sinful worms. We have forfeited God's love and incurred His righteous displeasure. We may look up, and there be none to regard us; we may cry, and there be no answer to our cry.

Yes, if salvation were a matter of human worthiness. But the Blessed Gospel is the revelation of the riches of Divine Grace. "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." Poor and sinful indeed we are, but His precious blood has put away our sins. And the love which thus gave itself for us, now lives on high to bless; it has an eye ever observant, an ear ever open; it cannot forget, it can never, never forsake us. Let us then who are His people and the sheep of His pasture, follow our great Exemplar, and in every sorrow, distress, and extremity, lift up our eyes to heaven. We have the good Shepherd's warrant, "*I am known of mine as I know the Father.*"

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY.

The Corn of Wheat.

ST. JOHN XII. 24.

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

THIS image is taken from one of the most ordinary of nature's processes. A corn of wheat not cast into the ground, abides alone; it cannot reproduce itself. But cast into the ground, and dying in the ground, it produces its own likeness, thirty-fold, sixty-fold, an hundred-fold.

The Son of God is the Corn of Wheat. He needed not to have been cast into the ground; He might have remained in the glory which was His before the world was. But He would in that case have abode alone, and love desires not solitude. It delights in producing its own likeness, in communicating blessedness, and in sharing that which it communicates. He died therefore and was cast into the ground; He abode "in the heart

of the earth." And His own words have been indeed accomplished, He has brought forth much fruit. The three thousand gathered on Pentecost, the abundant gatherings of the Apostolic age, the gathering of every generation to the end, swelling at last into a multitude which no man can number, of every kindred and tongue and people—are the fruit He has brought forth unto God. The sowing-time was one of weeping, "Oh, my Father," He said, "let this cup pass from me." But the harvest-time shall be joyous, He shall see for ever of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied.

But our Lord in giving utterance to these words was not thinking of Himself only, His disciples were around Him. And He sought to teach them the lesson of self-sacrifice, commended in His sacred example. They too, were to be as corns of wheat, they were to fall into the ground and die—die to all earthly hopes and expectations, and their reward was to be the bringing forth much fruit. "If any man serve Me," is His word, "let him follow Me;" and again, "If any man serve Me, him will my Father honour." And the honour

promised was of a kindred character to His own, "from henceforth thou shalt catch men." But the flesh dislikes self-sacrifice, we love our lives. Our Lord therefore spake again, "He that loveth his life shall lose it,"—lose the enjoyment he seeks to secure. "But he that hateth his life in this world," consenting to be a sacrifice for God's glory and man's salvation, "shall keep it unto life eternal." For "they that be wise, shall" in that day, "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that have turned many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. xii. 3).

What then, is our choice? Do we love our lives—ease, fleshly comfort, selfish enjoyment? Verily we shall have our reward. We shall abide alone, passing through God's world without effecting anything for His glory, passing out and in among our fellows without guiding any to happiness and to Him. Sad and unenviable lot, a losing of life! Or do we hate our lives in this world, seeking not our ease, but God's glory, not our selfish comfort, but man's salvation? Our hands may hang down oftentimes, and our knees wax feeble; we may complain in bitterness of

heart that we labour in vain and spend our strength for nought. But let us not yield to such discouraging thoughts. A joy kindred to that which was set before our Blessed Master is set before us now. Knowing that He should see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, that He should not abide alone, He failed not in His arduous work. He sees of that travail now; He shall see and be satisfied for ever. And we too, if we faint not, shall see of our souls' travail, we shall not abide alone, we shall bring forth much fruit. "With what rapture, in the eternal kingdom, shall the father embrace his child, the husband his wife, the friend his friend, before the throne of God! This was the unwearied and ardent suppliant for my happiness, this the beloved hand which thy grace taught to sue and to receive for me the gift of salvation." Surely this will *satisfy;* time's sacrifices shall be forgotten in this abundant recompense of eternity.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY.

Christ's Word of Consolation.

ST. JOHN XIV. 1.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God (believe in God, *margin*), believe also in Me."

THESE words commence a chapter; we therefore interpret them by the succeeding context only. The hearts of the disciples were not to be troubled, because they were to trust in Him to whose parting words they were now listening. There were many mansions in His Father's house; He was going to prepare a place for them; when He came again, He would receive them to Himself for ever.

This is true, but not the whole truth. If we would have the full meaning of this precious Scripture, we must look also to what has preceded.

Our Lord had declared to His disciples (xiii. 33), "whither I go, ye cannot come." He had again declared to Simon Peter (verse 36), "thou

canst not follow Me now." And when that disciple protested, "I will lay down my life for Thy sake," He had replied with emphatic and mournful earnestness, "the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." These were startling words. Simon Peter must have been utterly astounded by them. I have seen my Master's glory, he would say, I have heard His words of eternal life, I have been a witness for three years to His works of superhuman mercy, I thought I knew Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God. But all this, it seems, is to end in open denial of His name! I need struggle therefore no longer against my wicked heart; let me abandon myself at once to despair. Nor would his fellow-disciples be less discouraged and amazed. Our Master, they would say, has selected the most forward of us all, the most zealous, the most loving. If even he is to fail and apostatise, how shall we stand? It had been better for us—far better—that we had never put our hands to the plough.

Our Blessed Lord looked round the Table, and encountered only *troubled countenances*, the sure

index of *troubled hearts*. He would not leave His disciples thus; "let not your hearts be troubled" was His word of immediate encouragement. It is true that you have no stability, that one of you will deny, and all the rest will forsake Me. But be not therefore cast down, "believe in God." He can restore, He can strengthen. He can make straight paths for your feet, He can give you victory in the end. "Believe also in Me," for "he that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." "I go to prepare a place for you" among the "many mansions" of the palace of the Great King. And say not in your hearts, we shall never be worthy to dwell there. I will make you worthy. I will strengthen your feebleness, I will cleanse your impurity, I will elevate your grovelling affections. And when I have prepared you for the place I am preparing for you, "I will come again and receive you to myself." "My joy in you" shall then abide, and "your joy shall be full," for "where I am, there shall ye be also."

These words were not designed to comfort the disciples only; they sustain and cheer the

Christian in his deepest discouragements now. Our hearts are faithless, wavering, treacherous; we may well question the possibility of our attaining the heavenly kingdom. But the text says, look upward, "believe in God." He has sent His only-begotten Son into the world that you might live through Him. Again the word is, "believe also in Me." He who speaks has loved you and given Himself for you. And He takes the burden of your salvation on Himself. He brings God to you, and you to God; He prepares Heaven for you, and you for Heaven. You have indeed no stability, it is true that you can do nothing. But "let not your hearts be troubled," HE IS ABLE TO DO ALL.

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY.

God's Free Justification.

ROMANS III. 24.

"Being justified freely by His grace."

"How is justification *free and by grace*," is the question of many, "*when Christ died to obtain it?*" We read of the creditor who had two debtors—"when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both" (Luke vii. 41, 42). No equivalent was asked. But in what is called the free forgiveness of the Gospel, the costliest possible equivalent is both asked and rendered.

It were well if in using words we always weighed their meaning. What is *a free* pardon? A pardon which costs *the Bestower* nothing, or one which costs *the Receiver* nothing? The latter most certainly. The more a pardon costs the bestower, the more is his grace enhanced. If the creditor of the parable had reduced himself

to beggary by asking nothing of his debtors, it would have been a frank forgiveness indeed.

It is in this way that Holy Scripture always represents the forgiveness of the Blessed God. We shall search its pages in vain for a pardon *which cost Him nothing.* "He spared not His own Son, but gave Him up to the death" (Rom. viii. 32); "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He hath put Him to grief" (Isaiah liii. 10). It pleased Christ to be bruised. "He fell on His face and prayed, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass;" "He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke xxii. 44). "Nevertheless," He added, "not as I will, but as Thou wilt," "I delight to do Thy will, O my God" (Psalm xl. 8).

Here was the grace of which the words before us speak: the Father's grace, the Son's grace. God put Himself to cost that He might have a pardon to bestow.

But to *us the receivers,* as the same Scripture everywhere teaches, this pardon is absolutely free. Faith in Christ is but the acceptance of it.

Such faith adds nothing to the pardon, nothing to the grace which bestows it. Neither is it in any sense an equivalent for what is bestowed. It is no equivalent for creating love to believe that God created us. It is no equivalent for providential kindness to believe that God takes care of us. Neither is it any equivalent for redeeming love to believe in that love's reality, and in that love's unspeakable gift.

Repentance is the effect of this pardon when believed and thankfully accepted. It is the regenerating power exercised by Divine kindness when apprehended by the human heart. "He saved us," says St. Paul, "by the washing of regeneration which He shed on us abundantly." But when? "After that the kindness and philanthropy of God our Saviour appeared" (Titus iii. 4–6, *Greek*). When the light of that kindness shines into the heart, when the rays of that philanthropy illumine the darkness within, the mighty work is done. We come to ourselves—we repent—we arise and return to our Father.

Herein is that saying true—"the goodness

of God leadeth to repentance" (Rom. ii. 4.) As has been beautifully and touchingly written—

"'Tis finished all, the vail is rent,
The welcome sure, the access free;
Now then we leave our banishment,
O Father, to return to Thee!"

But this mercy is with God before any repentance of ours. It was with Him from everlasting, it has no cause but itself. God loves because He loves, and forgives because He forgives; it is His nature and property, "God is Love." This is the real meaning of *the free pardon* of the blessed Gospel. "They hated Me," says the Lord Jesus, "without a cause" (John xv. 25). The cause was in those that hated Him, not in Him. "Being justified," says St. Paul, "without a cause (*Greek*) by His grace." The cause is in Him who justifies, not in us the justified. He who knows this free pardon, finds God to be what He is—a Friend and a Father. The discovery is EVERLASTING LIFE (John xvii. 3).

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY.

Abraham the Prototype of the Christian.

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ROMANS iv. 11, 16, 17.

"Abraham received the sign of circumcision, that he might be the father of all them that believe. *He is the father of us all before God.*"

ABRAHAM was, after the flesh, the father of the Jew. And St. Paul declares in these words, that he is, after the Spirit, the father of the Christian. He is so, especially in two respects—

I. He was justified by faith.

II. He was chosen and called of God, that he might be a blessing to others.

THERE are two ways of being justified—*by works* and *by grace*. St. Paul contrasts these sharply in the preceding context, and refers to God's dealings with Abraham as his apt illustration. The man who brings his works to God claims the reward of service rendered. The man who comes empty-handed, *working not*, but believing

in Divine mercy freely bestowed on him *as an "ungodly" creature*, finds acceptance before Him (verses 4, 5). These last words are evidently meant to describe the faith of Abraham when God showed to him the sin of his past years and revealed to him His forgiving mercy. They describe also the faith of his descendant, Saul of Tarsus, when the same God showed to him that he had been an enemy of all goodness, but offered to him, at the same instant, the shelter of the Everlasting Arms. And they describe to this hour all the faith in the world that, in the sight of God, is genuine and true. It is *working not;* it is simply *trusting in eternal mercy.* Even as "Abraham believed God" (verse 3).

But Abraham comes before us in Scripture in another character. He was chosen of God, and called out of heathen darkness, that he might be a blessing to a dark world.

God says indeed, "I will bless thee," but He adds immediately, "*thou shalt be a blessing; in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed*" (Gen. xii. 1–3). Abraham could not say, God cares only for me, and therefore I have been

chosen and called. The terms of the Divine call had taught him *the very contrary.* He could not help saying, I have been called to inherit blessing *that I may also communicate blessing.*

If, as Christians, we are indeed Abraham's children, it were well that we took home this lesson. Let us never be found saying, we are God's elect people, we are chosen to blessing and salvation, God cares for us only. This was not the election of our great father. "God so loved *the world* that He gave His only-begotten Son" (John iii. 16). He gave Him to die. And it was for *the world* He died—"the propitiation," says St. John emphatically, "for the sins of the whole world" (1 John ii. 2). "The blessing of Abraham," the blessing of salvation, has thus "come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ" (Gal. iii. 14). But this poor world, alas! knows not the time of its visitation. Our calling, as the elect of God, is to make the world know it. It is to carry the light of life into its thick darkness, to bring God's salvation and His eternal mercy into the homes and hearts of men. Nor is it to speak of good only; it is to do good. Is any in

perplexity? It is our part to counsel and guide him. Is any in sorrow? It is our part to comfort him. Is any hungry? It is our part to feed him. Our business in the world is to do good: we are in it as ministers of God's blessing. Whenever we forget this, whenever we are found asking "Am I my brother's keeper?" we are forgetting our election of God.

Let us not forget it, let us rather dwell on it continually. How the heart of Abraham must have swelled as he realized the wondrous thought, *I am ordained for the blessing of the world!* And even so, as we realize that his calling is ours also, shall our hearts swell with emotion. *What am I here for, but to do good?* will be the question we daily ask ourselves. And the earnest desire to fulfil this our high calling, will be the inspiring principle which animates our lives continually.

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY.

Nature of God's Love.

ROMANS V. 7, 8.

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

ST. PAUL has told us in the context, of himself and his Christian brethren, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." He has also declared the nature of that love in stating the character of its objects, "Christ died for the ungodly."

The verses before us are a further exposition of this thought. There is such a thing as righteousness, *i.e.*, strict justice in our dealings. It inspires respect but not love, far less the love of self-sacrifice; "scarcely for a righteous man will one die." There is also such a thing as goodness, the kind and benevolent heart, the open and liberal hand. Such qualities inspire love—

love of the highest character and equal to any sacrifice, "peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." But the love of the Cross, continues St. Paul, was neither the one nor the other. We, its objects, were not good, we were not even righteous, "we were sinners," "without strength," "ungodly." It was love excited by no qualities in the persons loved, the love of One whose nature and property is to be gracious.

This seems to resolve a question much contested and of great practical importance. We cannot render to God the joyful service of children without personal assurance of His love. But how shall we attain this blessing? Many inquire first into their own characters; they examine themselves if they are good and righteous; they seek to discover signs and tokens of the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. Would it not be well to ask first *of what love* they seek to be assured? If it is that which the Cross reveals, the words before us declare plainly that it is to the ungodly and the sinner. To be assured therefore that this love is ours, we need

to know simply that we are sinners and ungodly. The faith of the gospel is believing God's Word. To believe that Word, *is to be assured that it is true.* And if it declares His love, we need no farther assurance. It is impossible for God to lie.

This does not make needless the work of the Holy Spirit. He does not make us good and righteous that we may therefore conclude that the love of God is ours. He sheds abroad in the heart, as the context plainly teaches, God's love to the ungodly and the sinner. It is of Him we learn that we are sinners; "when He is come, He will reprove . . . of sin" (John xvi. 8). He also shows that God can love the sinner —that Christ died for the sinner—that for all manner of sin and blasphemy there is forgiveness in His precious blood. "He shall take of mine," said our blessed Lord, "and shall show it unto you" (xvi. 14). Showing these precious things of God, He makes room for Himself in the heart; and dwelling there as the Spirit of adoption, He teaches us to cry, Abba, Father. Thus believing, we learn to love; and loving, we learn to obey.

Our faith is an assured faith as respects both ourselves and God. We are assured that we are sinners and undone, for He has told us. We are assured equally of His love and mercy; the same lips of truth have pronounced the blessed word.

It would be very different with many if these simple things were understood. Instead of walking in darkness and having no light, they would serve God as a Father and a Friend. Let us seek to understand them, with the Spirit of truth for our guide. The gospel is a personal message, a word to us all individually. It only needs to be brought home. Let us ask "God the Holy Ghost" to "have mercy on us, miserable sinners," to show us our guilt, to show us also God's mercy. We shall be humbled under God's mighty hand, and also lifted up. We shall run the way of His commandments, for our hearts shall be set at liberty (Ps. cxix. 32, *P. B. v.*), we shall have peace with God.

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY.

Union to Christ.

ROMANS VII. 4.

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

THE Apostle in the context, and in the words before us, uses the illustration of the marriage-union. As the husband has a right to the wife's allegiance, so the law has dominion over us. But if the husband dies, the marriage-union is at an end, and the wife is at liberty to marry another. So, if the law is dead, we owe it no more allegiance, and are at liberty to look to another as the Object of our hope and confidence. It need scarcely be added, that that Other is He "that is raised from the dead."

But are the conditions of the case fulfilled,—is the law dead? *It is dead.* The Son of God destroyed it as a covenant of life when He died

on the accursed tree. That wondrous act met its full demand of righteousness; it was obedience "unto death." It met also its full demand of penalty; it had pronounced the doom of death, and that doom was executed on Calvary. In the Saviour "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father," we have God's solemn attestation that this work is done. That resurrection proclaims the conditions of forgiveness and acceptance fulfilled not partially but completely; it certifies us that in the matter of salvation we have nothing more to do with the law. He who has destroyed it presents Himself instead, as the Object of a better confidence, a surer hope. He bids us trust in His blood for our forgiveness, and in His righteousness for our acceptance. To do so, is to "be married to another."

Where, then, is the security for our personal righteousness, and that our life and conversation shall be to the praise of God? St. Paul's illustration fully answers such a question. The husband is to the wife an object of confidence, But he is also an object of love. These two are, in fact, inseparable. The loving heart confides,

"there is no fear in love, love casts out fear." And the confiding heart loves. Kindness encourages confidence, and the love which accompanies confidence is according to the kindness shewn. Now what is the kindness in the case before us—what encourages us to trust in "Him who is raised from the dead"? He loved us and gave Himself for us. We trust, for we cannot help trusting; we love, for we cannot help loving. No wife loves or can love a husband as the believing soul loves the Lord Jesus. "To you which believe, He is precious" (1 Peter ii. 7).

And obedience follows love, as the shadow the substance. We never heard, among the families of men, of a loving *but disobedient* wife. Where the husband is the object of confidence and affection, his will is law; it becomes a pleasure to please him, a joy to anticipate his wishes. Hence one source of maternal joy. The sons and daughters grow up around their father, his comfort, solace, and stay; the faithful wife rejoices that she has borne them. This is the image of the words before us, "that we

should bring forth fruit unto God." Every resistance to temptation, every act of self-denial, every deed done for God's glory, every effort made for man's welfare, is such "fruit unto God." It is *fruit* indeed, for it comes from our knowledge of the Saviour, from our faith in His name, from our love to His Blessed Person. We rejoice to bear such fruit, and seek to abound in it more and more. It pleases, and we know it, our Husband in the heavens. He died below to save us, He has been "raised from the dead," and lives above to bless us.

Future hope, moreover, is connected with this present joy. What shall it be, when we see Him face to face, to hear from His own lips that we have pleased Him—to hear HIM say, well done! Nothing more is wanted to fill eternity with gladness. And nothing more is wanted to stir us up now to all that is holy and to the praise of His blessed name.

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY.

Death by the Law.

ROMANS VII. 11.

"For sin, taking occasion by the Commandment, deceived me, and by it, slew me."

We have in these words part of the early mental history of the Apostle Paul. "I was alive without the law once," he tells us in the context, *i.e.*, I was full of hope towards God and confident expectation of His favour as the reward of my obedience, when as yet I knew not His law. "But when the commandment came," he adds, "sin revived and I died," *i.e.*, when the law came home to my heart and conscience in the fulness of its demands and in the glory of its holiness, I felt myself a miserable sinner, and sunk into despair. That law "which was ordained to life," to draw the creature to its God and teach it joyful obedience, Saul the Pharisee

"found thus to be unto death;" it drove him from God, and quenched all hope within him.

The words before us are a further detail of this experience. The "sin" of which they speak, was the self-righteous pride of the Pharisee's unhumbled heart. That pride took "occasion by the commandment," it told him that by obedience to the commandment, he could justify himself before God; it set him upon doing so. But as the law began to open on his awakening conscience, he felt that he was "deceived," that his pride had deceived him. That very pride, by sending him to the law, drove him to despair—"by it, slew me." He had thus to bless God who sent him to the law, even by his own sin. For if he found there the death of nature, it was that he might find also the life of grace. He found that life in One who had fulfilled the law; the law was his schoolmaster to bring him to Christ, that he might be justified by faith.

This has been the mental history of hundreds in every age of the Church. There are many who say, "We have kept God's commandments,

and have good hope of His eternal favour." There are many whom the pride of their hearts sets upon keeping these commandments, that they may justify themselves before Him. Among the latter was the great Luther. From his inmost soul thirsting for salvation, he set himself to keep God's law. But he found, with Saul of Tarsus before him, that the pride of his heart had deceived him. "If I should work to eternity," said he in his despair, "I shall never obtain the blessing." A brother in the Convent whispered in his ear, "I believe in the remission of sin." Luther had often heard these words before, but not as he heard them now. They were to him life from the dead; they told of the mercy of God in Christ, a door of hope to ruined man. Luther believed as Saul had done before him, and believing, found salvation.

Let us ask God to lead us in the same way of life. If we think to find life in the law, let us ask Him to shew us the law. "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*" (Matt. xxii.

37, 39). This, and this alone, is the righteousness that pleases God. The discovery is indeed utter despair. But let us not fear such despair. "The darkest hour is next the dawn;" such despair may be to us, as it was to Saul and Luther, the portal to eternal hope. The Son of God has fulfilled the law on our behalf, He has also borne its penalty; there is forgiveness and everlasting acceptance for His righteousness sake. Blessed despair of self, that leads to hope in Him! Blessed hope that leads to serve as Saul of Tarsus served—that strengthens to do and suffer as Luther did and suffered! May such wholesome despair, may such glad hope, be ours!

THIRTIETH SUNDAY.

Intercession of Christ.

ROMANS VIII. 27.

"He maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God."

INTERCESSION is for *the saints*. It is the service not of love alone, but of sympathy. The Son of God gave His flesh for the life of the world. And yet He Himself has declared, "I pray not for the world" (John xvii. 9).

To intercede, is to present to God the desires of human hearts. We ourselves do this when we pray. But "we know not what we should pray for, as we ought." "The Spirit" therefore "helpeth our infirmities," yea Himself "maketh intercession *in us* with groanings which cannot be uttered" (*v.* 26). Nor is the Divine cry within us only, it is beside us also, "we have an Advocate with the Father" (1 John ii. 1). He knows what His people are desiring, whither

their aspirations tend, what is the meaning of their unuttered groanings. He clothes these groanings in language, gives form to these desires and aspirations, spreads them before His Father and their Father (John xx. 17), and brings back the answer of peace.

This service of love and sympathy is "according to the will of God." Man, by His eternal counsel, is the channel of blessing to his fellow. The Intercessor for man is therefore "the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. ii. 5). But "Jesus Christ *the Righteous*" is His name (1 John ii. 1). And His righteousness rejects what is impure and evil. The unholy aspiration, the lawless and ungodly desire, He will not take up into His lips (Psalm xvi. 4).

How deeply solemn and practical are considerations like these! Let us take them home to ourselves. Are we among those for whom the Son of God can pray? Are the desires of our hearts of such a character that He can present them above? Is fleshly pleasure our solace? is it our chief desire and anxiety to be able to gratify our lusts? *Our whole course is abhorred*

before Him; He turns from our tastes and desires with infinite, with eternal loathing. Is it our object to amass wealth, to gratify "the pride of life" while we live, to leave a name and substance behind us when we die? Such desires "are not of the Father" (1 John ii. 16); "thou fool" *is Christ's sentence on them all* (Luke xii. 20). But perhaps we despise wealth. Honour, influence, position, a high reputation among men, are the objects which we set before us. We may be cheered in seeking these by the applause of our fellow-creatures, *but they awaken no sympathy in the bosom of the Son of God.* No intercession of His shall help us to their attainment, nor shall His smile reward our success; they are "of the earth, earthy."

There is a people in the world who know God's name, and whose first desire is His glory. They abhor ungodliness and worldly lusts; their wealth, their honour, their all they consecrate to a Father in Heaven. With this "peculiar people" the Son of God has sympathy. Their desires and anxieties are His own. The objects for which they live are those for which He lived,

yea, for which He died and rose again. His Intercession sustains them in their difficult and arduous course, and when they shall have reached the goal, His smile shall be their recompense for ever.

How blessed to be numbered among these saints of God! To know that between our hearts and the Saviour's there is a chord of sympathy — a chord which touched on earth vibrates to the eternal throne! To know that while struggling with difficulties without, we are remembered within the vail—that our Intercessor can no more forsake us than He can deny Himself—that when difficulty and discouragement are ended, His "WELL DONE" shall fill eternity with joy! Such knowledge is "the victory that overcomes the world" (1 John v. 4).

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY.

More than Conquerors.

ROMANS VIII. 37.

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

To withstand an enemy successfully; to blunt the edge of the sword that is pointed at us; so to arm ourselves against malice and violence that they are powerless to harm, is to be *conquerors.* To turn that enemy's malice to our advantage; to make his violence work our good; to bring blessing and peace out of what was meant for evil, is to be "*more than conquerors.*" The former is sometimes man's achievement; the latter is always the Lord's.

The words before us are a glorious example of this. "In all these things we are more than conquerors." What things? "Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword;" being for Christ's sake "killed all the

day long," and "counted as sheep for the slaughter" (*v.* 35, 36). The Enemy hoped by these things to make His people weary of their Lord, for affliction when continued long, breaks the spirit and utterly subdues the courage. He hoped also to make their Lord weary of a people so vile, so degraded, so contemptible. His object was mutual alienation, to "separate from the love of Christ" (*v.* 35). The result was just the opposite of what malice had forecast. He drew the bond tighter. The Lord looked from Heaven on His troubled and distressed ones. He saw them hungry and naked and buffeted and without certain dwelling-place. His eye followed them in their daily, hourly perils; He watched the persecutor's sword as it marked them out for slaughter. He remembered that all this was endured for Him; and, because for Him, endured without a murmur. His people had never seemed so precious. The blow that was aimed at them He felt as descending on Himself; he that touched them touched the apple of His eye. "Saul, Saul," He said after Stephen had been slain, "why persecutest thou *Me?*" (Acts ix. 4).

And so with His people. Their Lord had never seemed so precious. They had known His love before; His own lips, much more His Cross, had declared it. But it was now commended to them as the reality of every hour, of every moment. Troubled, distressed, persecuted, in continual, mortal peril, they had only Him to flee to. And He never failed them. When overwhelmed with sorrow, He was near to comfort; when the heart fainted utterly, He was present to sustain; when they were in want of all things, His Providence supplied their need. The deeper the darkness that surrounded them, the more precious was He felt to be, their only light and consolation. The more that earthly friends abandoned and earthly comforters forsook them, the more closely did they cleave to Him, their ever-living Friend above. Did the Enemy separate them then from the love of Christ? No; never had He loved them, or they loved Him, so well. The Saviour and the saved clave the one to the other—He to "*His own* which were in the world," suffering for His name—they to *their own* who was above, for whom they

suffered because they loved Him, and whom they loved because they suffered for Him. Those bonds were rivetted which malice sought to sever, they were "more than conquerors through Him that loved" them.

And this is only a sample of the over-abounding grace of Him who has loved His people. He is the great Alchymist who turns everything to gold. Not persecution and the sword only, but "*all things* work together for good to them that love God" (*v.* 28). Let none who trust in Him be discouraged. Our darkest providences, our sorest trials, our deepest sorrows, shall be made by Him on whom our confidence reposes to conduce to His glory and our eternal good. Yea, even our errors and falls shall issue in our rising to run with renewed strength. And when we shall come at length to dwell in our Father's house, we shall find that goodness and mercy have ordered even the roughest of our way.

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY.

God's Threefold Grace.

1 CORINTHIANS VI. 11.

"Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are justified, but ye are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

IN these words we have the Christian condition set forth in three aspects—*washing, justification, sanctification.* This threefoldness of condition stands also connected with the three Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity—"the name of THE LORD JESUS, and THE SPIRIT of OUR GOD."

Justification has to do with "the name of the Lord Jesus." He is the absolved, the accepted One of God. And we, coming to God in His Name, are absolved and accepted in Him the beloved One. "Wash away thy sins," it was said to Saul the persecutor, "calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts xxii. 16). As the name of the husband covers the wife, as the name of the

father covers his family, the name of the Lord Jesus covers His people. They are beheld by God, not as they are, but as He is. The Divine blessing rests on Him above. And through all their afflictions, sorrows, and temptations, it follows them below.

Here is the death of self-righteousness. If we would ever obtain Divine absolution, Divine acceptance, we must owe them to another's name. *Our name is of no repute with God.* To believe on Christ is to confess this. Hard lesson for nature! But not therefore the less needful, if we would find the way to life. "Stoop, stoop, or you will break your head," was the exclamation of a Hindoo to his fellows, when he heard a missionary preach Christ. He spoke the truth. To learn Christ is indeed to stoop. It is to confess that we are nothing, and to glory only in Him.

Sanctification stands connected with the same name. It means *setting apart.* Our holiest human relation is the setting apart of one woman to one man. And it is marked by a change of name. The woman loses her own name, and thence-

forth bears her husband's. Thus it was in the beginning with those who believed on the Lord Jesus; they were baptized in His name. It was the seal of justification—it told that His name covered them. It was the seal of sanctification also—it told that they were His. They were "married to another," and bore that Other's name. And if the marriage-covenant declares the husband responsible, it binds the wife to be faithful. Christian Baptism has still the same meaning. Let us take heed how we use it lightly and unadvisedly; to do so, is to take God's name in vain. It is the seal for us and ours of justification in the Lord Jesus, and consecration now and for ever to the holy service of God.

But what shall prevent this grace from being turned into wantonness? what shall give effect to this solemn consecration? "Ye are washed," is the answer of St. Paul. He who washes is He who has accepted and consecrated—"by the Spirit of *our God*." The washing is essential to the completion of His blessed work. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me"

(John xiii. 8). It is also effectual, like all the acts of God. The "disobedient" are made obedient; the "foolish" wise; the servant of lust and pleasure is made the servant of God; he who lived "in malice and envy, hateful and hating" his fellow, is taught to walk in love, "by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus iii. 3–5). God's consecration thus becomes effectual; His justification the harbinger and foretaste of glory.

Such is the Christian in the three aspects of his condition—accepted of God—consecrated to His service—cleansed by His Spirit. And like the Spirit, the water, and the blood, these three are one. Into this glorious estate had the Corinthians been raised out of the very mire of heathenism. And we, as well as they, may prove its blessedness through the power of a Saviour's name, and the energy of His mighty Spirit. Let us seek it as silver, and search for it as for hid treasure. It is the joy of time, and the foretaste of the joy of eternity.

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY.

No Schism in the Body.

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1 CORINTHIANS XII. 25.

"That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care, one for another."

THE human body is, in the language of the context, so "tempered together," that its members cannot help assisting each other; they do so without our thinking about it, and almost without our consciousness. If the hand is engaged in any difficult or delicate operation, the eye bends over it to guide; if a blow is aimed at the eye, the same hand is raised with instinctive courtesy to shield it. Again, if danger is near, the eye or ear gives notice; the tongue calls for help; the hands defend the body, or the feet carry it to a place of safety. A schism in the body would be the cessation of these offices of love, the members no longer having this care one for another. It would be the eye suffering the

hand to work alone; the hand refusing to defend the eye; the ear giving no notice of danger; the tongue sounding no alarm; the feet abiding motionless when flight alone could save. Such schism would destroy the body; none of us could live through a single day were our members to act thus. Life is perpetuated in the combination of members by a mutual ministry which never ceases.

We Christians "are the Body of Christ, and members in particular." And God has tempered this Body together on the same principle of mutual care. As the eye ministers to the hand, and the hand to the eye, so are we to minister to each other. As the eye, the ear, the tongue, the hand, the foot—contribute each its share to the preservation of the body, so is each one of us to contribute our share to the comfort and blessing of our fellows. Their blessing is our blessing, and their life our life; we are one. Thus St. Paul wrote to these same Corinthians, "Who is weak, and I am not weak, who is offended (led into sin), and I burn not?" (2 Cor. xi. 29). It was the language not of an Apostle merely, but

of a Christian; it ought to be the language, *the feeling* of us all.

The mutual ministry of the members of the human body, is not regulated by law. It is the fruit of instinct, the instinct of a common life. And so it is with this care which Christ's members have for each other. Enactment cannot secure it, it is the instinct of life—the life of the spiritual Body. That life is Love. In so far as it is absent, there is necessarily a schism in the Body—a denial of the brotherly claim, a refusal of the brotherly ministry. And such schism in the spiritual Body is as disastrous as in the natural.

How then stands the case with us? Another is weak. Do we compassionate and help, or do we despise his weakness? He is led into sin. Does it fall with crushing weight upon our hearts, or do we say, "Am I my brother's keeper—my own salvation is enough for me to think of"? That brother is in sorrow. Do we feel it as our sorrow, or do we pass by on the other side? He has cause for joy; God's kingdom is advanced by his efforts, God's name is glorified. Do we give

thanks as if such grace were our own? or are we filled with jealousy, and grudge that we are passed by?

If our hearts bring us in guilty in answer to questions like these, let us be humbled, and watch and pray. The necessary tendency of this selfish isolation, this spirit of schism, is to extinguish the life of Christ's Body. And the extent to which it prevails paralyzes the action of that Body, and keeps the life of each member low. No statutes of outward uniformity have the slightest power to arrest it. Let us go to the root of the matter. Let us and "all His whole Church," ask our Father in Heaven to baptize us with the Spirit of Love. All asking and all receiving, we shall be knit together as one, we shall care for each other's welfare, we shall minister to each other's happiness. God shall be glorified in us His people, we shall be blessed in each other and in Him. This and this alone is Unity; all else is *Schism.*

THIRTY-FOURTH SUNDAY.

The End.

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1 CORINTHIANS XV. 24, 25, 28.

"Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be All in All."

THIS is a Scripture of acknowledged difficulty. "The end," of which it speaks, is generally regarded as the close of the millennial reign of glory; and "the kingdom delivered up," as that millennial kingdom. During the progress of that kingdom Christ has subdued all things under His feet. And having accomplished this, the great object of His reign, He resigns His throne to the Father.

This interpretation cannot be true. It is not during *the millennial reign* that all things are

subdued to the Saviour. His future throne of glory shall also never be resigned; "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. vii. 14).

Inspired History tells us of two thrones, the throne of David and the throne of Solomon. The former was set up and maintained in the midst of formidable enemies who were subjected, one by one, under the feet of its possessor. The latter was surrounded by friends; its possessor was a man of peace; there was neither "adversary nor evil occurrent" (1 Kings v. 4). Both thrones were typical. David typifies the Lord Jesus, sitting *on the Father's throne,* bringing all things in subjection under Him by His Gospel, His Spirit, His Providence. Solomon typifies the same Saviour, sitting *on His own throne,* judging a subject world in righteousness, and governing in truth and faithfulness nations which rejoice in His sway.

The language before us, "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet," refers then not to any future kingdom, but to the kingdom which is now. Jesus is now sitting with the

Father on His throne, "from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." And this seat He will retain till this blessed consummation is brought about, till all "rule, authority, and power" that opposes Him, is broken down.

"THEN COMETH THE END."—The end of the day of grace, the commencement of the day of glory. Jesus will leave the seat which now He occupies, delivering up by that act "the kingdom" which hitherto He has held. "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David; He shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever, and of HIS KINGDOM there shall be no end" (Luke i. 33, 34).

But what is the characteristic difference between the present and the future throne? The former is the throne of Deity, the latter that of glorified Humanity. On the former God alone may sit, therefore Jesus sits upon it now. But on the latter His people, the sharers of His glory, shall be privileged to sit beside Him—"to him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with Me on my throne" (Rev. iii. 22). We thus see at

once the meaning of "the Son Himself" being "subject." The exchange of thrones is itself an act of subjection. The throne of Deity is exchanged for that of redeemed humanity. He assumes it as the Head of humanity, the Head of redeemed Creation, that He may lead up universal nature to the worship of the Father of all.

The Millennial Kingdom shall thus be the last and highest tribute of the "honourable, true, and only Son" to "the Father of an infinite Majesty." When He obeyed Him as the lowly Jesus of Nazareth, His Royal Majesty was veiled in the weeds of mortal flesh. But when the King on His throne of glory, acknowledged and worshipped by all Creation as the Divine and Everlasting Son, shall own subjection to the Father and carry out His high behests, it shall be the last honour of Deity, "God" shall be "ALL IN ALL."

Let us seek the fellowship of the mind of Him who is evermore the lowly Jesus. So shall we be glorified with Him in the day when He comes again.

THIRTY-FIFTH SUNDAY.

The Law and the Gospel.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 56, 57.

"The strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

IT requires great boldness to announce any religious truth, however unquestionable, which shocks the feelings and prejudices of those who listen to us. Thus we are told by St. Paul that Esaias was *very bold* in announcing his nation's offcasting and the ingathering of the Gentiles. To the men of his generation such statements appeared blasphemous. But St. Paul himself is equally bold in his words now before us. The holy law of God the strength of sin! What would his devout but unenlightened countrymen think of so astounding a statement? They imagined that the law would teach them all that was good, and lead them at last to salvation. With what horror then would they regard the man who told them plainly that

it would teach them all that was evil, and conduct them at last to perdition!

He tells us the same. If the law be sought to for salvation, this is indeed its character. It is "the strength of sin," and sin is man's destroyer.

"How can *the holy* law," it is asked, be "the strength of sin"? *Because it is holy.* If it could lower its demands to meet the ability of the fallen creature, it might encourage him to make some efforts after goodness. But it cannot do so. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," it says, "with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself: this do and thou shalt live" (Luke x. 27, 28). The sinner answers, I cannot do so, accept my imperfect endeavours. The law refuses to accept them. It is the Divine standard of righteousness; not one jot or tittle of its demands can be abated. But by setting before us an unattainable perfection, it drives us into sin. Nothing so strengthens evil as despair of attaining to good.

And this is not all. The law, *because it is*

holy, has a sentence as well as a command; it debars the sinner from the presence of God. The leper among the sons of Israel was put forth of the camp; the plague-spot was upon him. A more terrible leprosy is upon us which God alone can heal. He alone can cleanse the heart, He alone can order the unruly will and affections, He alone can give the victory over evil, He alone can enable for what is good. But as often as we would come to this Blessed Healer, the condemning law is in our way. The very disease which requires the remedy is between us and that Healer's hand. What then shall we do? We can only abide in alienation, we can only submit to sin's dominion. The law pronounces our case utterly and eternally hopeless; "the strength of sin is the law."

There is "victory" in "our Lord Jesus Christ." The law's condemning sentence is cancelled in His blood; He has taken it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross. We may approach God without fear; we may invoke the Divine Healer's compassion, we may place ourselves in His merciful hands. The law's demand

of righteousness is met in the Saviour's all-perfect obedience, and God "imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom. iv. 6). Coming in that Saviour's name, we are in Him accepted, and our services are accepted too. There is encouragement to do God's will, and God Himself is our help in doing it. As the law is the strength of sin, we find the gospel to be the strength of righteousness. And we say with St. Paul before us, "thanks be to God!"

THIRTY-SIXTH SUNDAY.

God's Reserve.

1 CORINTHIANS XVI. 2.

"Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him."

WHETHER we observe this precept literally, in laying by us on the first day of the week, is of little consequence. But the precept contains a principle which is of great consequence, we are to lay by, *in store, as God hath prospered us.* As God increases our worldly goods, we are to acknowledge ourselves to be His stewards by setting aside, for His service, a portion of what He bestows. It may not be needed now; it is to be laid aside *in store,* it is *God's reserve.* Were this principle understood and acted on, religious and charitable objects would be provided for, on a scale very different from anything we see at present. The feeling is only too general, *what we give is withdrawn from ourselves.*

There is therefore an unwillingness to give; and when any new Christian object is named, we are indisposed to listen lest we be asked to give more. This unwillingness is combated by earnest appeals to the feelings. Money is needed for the sick and poor, for the ragged children of our streets, for the reclaiming of the ignorant and vicious, for the recovery of the fallen. Or it is needed for the far-off heathen, to send the Word of God and His Gospel to the ends of the earth. The services of some eloquent man are put in requisition, the case is stated in glowing language from the platform or the pulpit; and while the feelings are warm, money is easily obtained. But this is not God's way of obtaining money. To act from feeling is not well; we ought, as Christians, to act from principle. The silver and gold are HIS; we ought to bestow them for HIS service, because we know them to be HIS.

Let every one of us separate from our substance a portion for the service of God. The amount thus separated depends, of course, on ourselves. With the Jew of old it was a tenth, and Christian love should give more than Jewish

law. But whether it is a tenth or a fifth, it is God's portion; and the only question remaining is, its judicious and godly distribution. How shall we make it cover the most ground, and do the most good? There are the poor and necessitous immediately around us, we need no one to inform us of their wants. There are the Christian objects of our own locality, with them also we must be well acquainted. There are appeals from other places, for schools, for home missionaries, for hospitals, continually pouring in. The Christian pastor, taking in the field which is the world from his more elevated point of view, should keep his people informed of all the evangelical work that is being done everywhere. He should tell them of Ireland, of the Continent, of Turkey, of Syria, of India, of China, of Africa, of the Islands of the Sea. And as he spreads out the field before them, he should indicate where their liberality is needed most. No excitement is wanted, nor fervent appeals to the feelings, nor lengthened subscription-lists headed by honourable names. All these are unworthy of the Christian. Let it only be

pointed out how his liberality may glorify God; having freely received, the Christian freely gives. And God's own liberality thus returns to Himself, glorifying His name and advancing His cause in the world.

It scarcely needs to be pointed out that the amount thus laid by in store, must be enlarged as our substance increases. This increase comes of God's blessing; it is He who gives power to get wealth. That blessing must therefore be acknowledged. Such acknowledgment is the way to increase our substance here; God gives liberally to those who devise liberal things. It is also the certain way to recompense hereafter. All that is now laid by in store for God's service shall then abundantly return, for a cup of cold water shall in that day receive its reward.

THIRTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY.

Glory to Glory.

2 CORINTHIANS III. 18.

"But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

THE point of this text is in the words, "from glory to glory." The context speaks of Moses who put a veil upon his face. In like manner, says St. Paul, the veil is upon the hearts of our unbelieving brethren that they cannot discern the glory of God. Our "face" on the other hand is "open," *i.e.*, unveiled, and we see that glory. Not directly, no flesh may gaze on absolute Deity, but "in a glass." That glass is the face of Jesus Christ; Jesus, living and dying, reflects the glory of God. And we, beholding that reflection of Divine loveliness, are changed into the same image. Man always becomes like the object of his worship. The goddess Kali is

the patroness of murder; her worshippers are murderers. The worshippers of Astarte, the Latin Venus, were impure; she was the patroness of lust. Our Saxon forefathers were savage, they worshipped the cruel Woden, whose name is still preserved in our Wednesday. We Christians worship the All-Merciful, and are changed into His image of love.

We see thus the meaning of the words, "from glory to glory. They do not mean *from one degree of glory to another*, denoting the Christian's gradual advance in holiness. They mean *glory producing glory*, the glory of God looked at, producing the same glory in the looker; the creature gazing into the Creator's face, and as he gazes, becoming like Him. We are told that Moses was the meekest of the sons of men. He became so by contemplating the meekness of God. He was face to face with Him for forty years. He was an amazed witness of the unheard-of provocations of the desert. He heard the Most High accused to His face of falsehood, of cruelty, of dishonourable and murderous intentions. Man would not bear such language

from his fellow-creatures, but God took it patiently. Moses saw him "many times turn His anger away and not stir up all His wrath;" he heard him say, they are "but flesh, a wind that passeth away and cometh not again" (Ps. lxxviii. 38, 39). And gazing into that countenance of everlasting meekness, Moses caught the likeness of what he saw. The character of his God was impressed on him. He could not be angry with any when God was so patient with all, he became "very meek." This is just the Apostle's idea, "from glory to glory." For it is the Christian's experience still. God's glory is His goodness, His loving-kindness, His patience, His mercy, His truth. And as we know Him in Christ, we become good as He is good. In beholding, in admiring, in adoring, we are made like the Blessed Object of our worship.

Let us understand then how the gospel makes holy. It does not appeal to self-interest, it does not hold out escape from hell or the attainment of heaven, as the reward of goodness. Men cannot be made *really good* by such means; for real goodness is likeness to God. And the fear

of hell, though set before us all day long, will never produce this result; nor will the hope of happiness hereafter. To be made like God, we must be brought face to face with Him. "The Spirit of the Lord" does this for us by revealing Christ in our hearts. And as the softened wax receives the impression of the seal, these hearts, melted by His gracious power, receive the impression of the goodness of our God.

Let us also learn from this Scripture what real glory is. Power, wealth, intellectual greatness are but tinsel; real glory in God or man, is to be good. The tinsel shall soon fade.

> "So sleeps the pride of former days,
> So glory's thrill is o'er,
> And hearts that once beat high for praise
> Shall feel that pulse no more."

God's glory fadeth not; and that of His people (for they are like Him,) is as enduring as His own.

THIRTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY.

The Marks of the Lord Jesus.

GALATIANS VI. 17.

"From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

THIS is a most touching appeal. The Epistle to the Galatians was written a few years only before the Apostle's martyrdom; he was already "Paul the aged." Consideration and tenderness were therefore his due, and he entreats that they may be shewn to him, "let no man trouble me." He had been almost broken-hearted by the "trouble" which the Galatians had already given him by hearkening to "another gospel;" he prays them not to give him such cause of sorrow again, "*from henceforth* let no man trouble me."

He enforces his claim, he gives a reason why his entreaty should be heard. "I bear in my

body the marks of the Lord Jesus." If we look to the antecedents of the writer, we shall not ask what these "marks" were. "Of the Jews five times," he tells us elsewhere, "received I forty stripes save one." Surely these stripes left some scar upon him. "Thrice was I beaten with rods." The Romans knew well how to beat with rods. Men often died under the infliction, for every stroke fetched the life-blood. The Apostle carried doubtless to the day of his death the marks of these terrible flagellations. "Once was I stoned." Thrown with all the fury of envenomed bigotry, these stones surely scarred their victim. And then there was shipwreck; perils of the deep; perils also in the city, the wilderness, the sea; weariness and painfulness; hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness; and the wearing anxiety of "the care of all the churches" (2 Cor. xi. 24–27). He must have had a frame of iron if all this had not told upon him. It did tell doubtless in the hair prematurely grey, and the wrinkled visage, and the stooping gait, and all the signs which shew that "the strong man bows himself." And

appearing thus among the faithful, scarred and worn down in their common Master's service, "Paul the aged" besought at their hands that tender treatment and kind consideration which he felt to be his due.

Britons do not need to be told to show respect to the scarred veteran. Let an old soldier come among us, his constitution broken by exposure to pestilential climates, and his body maimed and disfigured by honourable wounds in his country's cause, none is found so base as to treat him with dishonour. If such an one were found, words would not be needed to reprove him; the veteran's scars were his reproof. So in the case before us. Look on me, St. Paul could say, and *if you can find it in your hearts,* be rebellious and unkind. This arm has never recovered itself since I was stoned at Lystra; the stripes of the Jew and the flagellations of the Roman make me feel prematurely old. Brethren, these scars were for our common Master's sake—"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

From all this we see the fervour of early love

to the Saviour. His people counted their scars as their distinction; they appealed to their sufferings for Him as their claim to honour. And all these scars and sufferings seemed too little; it was not enough to hazard life, they longed to give it. "I am ready," says the writer of the words before us, "to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts xxi. 13). Whence came this fervour of love? Let themselves answer, "He first loved us." He bore in His body, and they knew it, the scars, the death-prints He had received for them; these scars remained on His resurrection-body, His people's everlasting memorial (John xx. 27). What more fitting then, than that such a Master should have His memorial in His people? Love impelled them to desire this, to seek the fellowship of His sufferings and to be conformed unto His death.

Let us never forget that we have been loved as truly and as well. So shall we love as they did. And loving "God our Saviour," we shall strive to walk worthy of His name.

THIRTY-NINTH SUNDAY.

God's Good Work in Us.

PHILIPPIANS I. 6.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

HERE is very much that is profitable, and as consoling as profitable. "A good work." Where? "In you," *i.e.*, in the heart of man. What is a *good* work? We may see it in its opposite. If we tempt a man to sin, if we familiarize him with evil, if we lead him to do what he would once have shrunk from, it is a *bad* work, the worst we can perform. If we lead a man out of sin to God, shewing him sin's true character, teaching him to know God, to feel the power of His love, and to fix his hopes on God's eternal recompense, we do a *good* work, the best we can perform. This is the work here referred to.

It had been the Apostle's work at Philippi, it is the work of every Christian still.

But St. Paul was not the real worker at Philippi. Mark his words—"*He* which hath begun a good work in you." God was the worker, the Apostle was but His instrument. It was God who "opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended to the things" which he spake (Acts xvi. 14). The case is the same still. The most earnest and zealous Christian cannot work in another's heart. To arouse the conscience, to appeal with power to the affections, to raise the hopes above a present world, to overcome and sway the will, is God's work; He and He alone can "order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men." Real religion is thus in all generations the same. It is the same *objectively;* righteous Abel had the same object of faith with ourselves. It is the same *subjectively;* God is its author, its only author in the heart of man.

There is great consolation here, for "He who hath begun will perform." Are we sure? I am "confident of this very thing," says St. Paul. He will not begin and leave unfinished. He will

not forsake the work of His own hands. *To perform* means *to carry on.* And how long will He carry on this good work in His people's hearts? "Till the day of Jesus Christ." "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels" (Malachi iii. 17). And the jewels made up in that day supposes the work finished.

A king's coronation is at hand, and his jewels are being prepared. We see the royal jeweller busily engaged with rubies and diamonds, and we ask him why? He answers, they are my Sovereign's jewels, and I am preparing them for His use. Now "the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain king who made a marriage for his Son" (Matt. xxii. 1). And the espousals and coronation are together; when "the marriage of the Lamb is come," He "shall sit upon the throne of His glory." And for that "day of the gladness of His heart" His jewels are now being prepared. These jewels are His believing, His holy ones. And He who hath begun to prepare them for the day of glory, will not cease His work till that day arrives.

Let us take the comfort of this thought. If God has taught us anything of our sinfulness and anything of His love; if He has taught us to look to Him as a Father, and put our trust in His grace, we may be "confident of this very thing," that He will perform the work He has begun. Only let us not be dismayed at the means He makes use of for performing it. Years as they roll on, may bring with them anxiety, sorrow, bereavement, but no strange thing is happening to us. "Earthly care is a heavenly discipline." And grievous, very grievous as such discipline is to nature, it is the polishing of the stones of grace. If we endure it, God dealeth with us as with sons. The Lord Jesus shall soon be revealed in His glory. Exalted in that day with Him who died for us, jewels in His crown of brightness, we shall look back from the light of eternity on all our course in time, and understand the reason of the severest dealings of our God. There shall be no murmuring, no repining then. The GLAD consciousness that we are HIS —made meet for HIS USE, FOR EVER, shall make rich amends for all our sorrows now.

FORTIETH SUNDAY.

The Name of Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS II. 10, 11.

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

THE names of men are often unmeaning. Not so the names of God. They reveal His character, they tell us what He is. *God* is *the Good One;* the letter *o* has dropped from the adjective, but its meaning remains. Thus, to bow *at the name* of Jesus, is to bow to Him for what He is; to confess Him Lord, to acknowledge that because of what He is, He is worthy of dominion, power, and glory.

Jesus is Jah Hoshua, *i.e.*, God the Saviour. The name designates Him who, as the context tells us, being in the form of God, emptied Himself, and was made in the likeness of men. Being found moreover in that likeness, He

humbled Himself and was obedient. And death was the measure of that obedience, even the death of the Cross. He tells us Himself why He stooped thus low,—"that the world may know that I love the Father" (John xiv. 31). He tells us again why He did so—"love one another, as I have loved you" (xv. 12). It was love that stooped. It stooped from Godhead's glory to manhood's lowest shame, from the throne of everlasting light to the darkness of the silent grave. That love is again enthroned. It has exchanged the shame of the Cross for the adoration of angels; the darkness of the sepulchre for the light unapproachable which surrounds the Throne above. *Jah Hoshua, God the Saviour*, has now its full development. God has stooped that He might become the Saviour: the Saviour has resumed His native seat as God.

This is the hidden mystery of the name Jesus. The knee bows at that name because the heart adores it. It is love combined with power, and power with love—love suffering patiently unto death, love enthroned to rule in righteousness

for ever. The tongue confesses Him Lord because the heart acknowledges that He, and He alone, is worthy of power and dominion. The end of power is that by its exercise God may be glorified. He laid down His life for the glory of the Father. The end of power is the blessedness of those subject to it. He laid down His life for man's salvation, and "men shall be blessed in Him."

Thus the loving heart thinks of Christ. And in so thinking of Him it is of one mind with God. His exaltation is "to the glory of God the Father." It reveals His appreciation of the holy, the pure, the true. Love is that which God appreciates, for "God is Love." And *self-sacrifice* is love in its highest exhibition, its loveliest development. Such was the Cross. And therefore now the Crown.

What then think we of Christ? Do our hearts bow before Him? Do we gladly consent that He should wear this crown of glory? If this mind is really in us, we shall shew it as those did to whom St. Paul was now writing. For thus he proceeds, "My beloved, *ye have*

always obeyed . . . it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." We too shall obey in thought, word, and deed. The will of God in Christ shall be our will, we shall esteem His commandments not grievous, and find our daily joy in keeping them. "The name of Jesus" is a stimulant which the world knows not, to all that is holy and of good report; it will be our stimulant if we have learned to love it.

And time, let us remember, is education for eternity; duties which shall soon be over, are a preparation for felicities which know no end. Really to bow at the name of Jesus, *i.e., to see as God sees, and to love what He loves*, opens therefore to the renewed heart a boundless vista of glory and of blessedness. Oneness of eye and mind with the Father of Heaven!—what is it but everlasting life?

FORTY-FIRST SUNDAY.

The Righteousness of God by Faith.

PHILIPPIANS III. 9–11.

"And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death. If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead."

In these words we have the aspiration of an Apostle's heart, negatively and positively. He desired not to have his own legal righteousness; he desired to have the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Legal righteousness is the righteousness of law. The law has a demand, "Do this;" it has also a promise, "Thou shalt live." St. Paul had once tried to meet this demand, that he might claim this promise. His righteousness then was his own; he gloried in its being so. And the

reward he looked for, was "not of grace, but of debt." But the commandment had come home to him in its spiritual character and condemning power; he had found himself a miserable sinner, and had sunk into despair. From that hour he had abjured his own legal righteousness, and abjures it in the words before us with all the earnestness of which his soul is capable.

The righteousness which is "through the faith of Christ," is that which the gospel teaches. The gospel also has a demand and a promise. But the promise comes first, "*the gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans vi. 23). The demand comes second, "Thou shalt love the Lord *thy God,* and His voice shalt thou obey." This demand is met "through the faith of Christ." "Faith worketh by love" (Gal. v. 6). And where love is, obedience follows. That "His commandments are not grievous" (1 John v. 3) was love's judgment in the beginning, and will be to the end.

This was the righteousness which St. Paul desired. He sought not *to do that he might live,* but *to live that he might do.* It was the one

aspiration of his soul to embrace and hold fast the forgiveness, the acceptance, the salvation that were in Christ Jesus, and in the power of the life which they ministered, to do God's will. Such righteousness is "of God." It is opposed to all nature's teachings, and all nature's desires.

St. Paul describes it in detail—"*that I may know Him*"—as the revelation of Divine love to my soul, as the taker away of my sin, as the maker of my peace with God, as my Mediator and Advocate on high. "*And the power of His resurrection*"—finding in that blessed revelation of love, in that Divine absolution, in that heavenly peace, in that assurance of acceptance, strength and power to walk in newness of life. "*And the fellowship of His sufferings*"—filled with His martyr-spirit, testifying of the world, in spite of hatred, reproach, and violence, "that the deeds thereof are evil." "*Being made conformable to His death*"—hazarding my life daily for Him as He gave His for me, exposed to mortal peril for His sake and rejoicing in it. This, he continues, is "the resurrection of the dead," "if I by any means might attain" unto it—the

resurrection from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, that eternal life which is to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.

These are the several parts, the distinguishing characteristics, of "the righteousness which is of God by faith." It is to know the Saviour as our peace, and being reconciled to God by His death, to die with Him to sin. It is to rise with Him to newness of life, and in the power of the Spirit of the risen One to be witnesses for God in the world. We cannot attain to such righteousness by the law. The law gives no peace with God, no knowledge of acceptance. It ministers no strength to die to sin, it gives no ability to walk in newness of life. It breathes no martyr-spirit; our highest aspiration in keeping it is to find salvation for ourselves. The gospel reveals One who, by dying on our behalf, has saved us. And, by teaching us to love as we have been loved, it makes us willing to give ourselves for Him. Lord, evermore grant us such a mind!

FORTY-SECOND SUNDAY.

Suffering Filled Up for Christ.

COLOSSIANS I. 24.

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for His body's sake, which is the Church."

If we would understand this sentence, we must mark well where we put the comma. If the comma comes after "Christ," then is the Roman Catholic right in saying, that there is something behind in "the afflictions" of the Holy One of God, and that we must fill up the deficiency by austerities, mortifications, and penances. But if the comma comes after "flesh," the sentence assumes a totally different meaning, as honouring to God as the other is dishonouring, as consoling to His people as the other is mournful and sad. It is also the natural meaning; no unprejudiced reader of the words before us, could understand them in any other sense.

St. Paul had been a great sufferer. His Lord had told him that it should be so, and the warning had been abundantly verified. Far from repining that such a lot had been appointed to him, St. Paul "rejoiced" in it. He was covetous of suffering, he had not endured what he esteemed to be enough, he was desirous of enduring more. His preaching of God's Word had brought him into prison and into bonds, and he was glad; it was a filling up of that which was behind, of the afflictions of Christ in His flesh. The martyr's crown was before him, the martyr-spirit was in him, he was ready, for his Master's name, not to be bound only, but to die (Acts xxi. 13).

Did he love suffering then for its own sake? Was it with him, as with the pillar-saints of after days, with the Anchorite who "hopes to merit Heaven by making Earth a Hell," with the Hindoo devotee who holds his arm above his head till it loses its vitality and withers? No, such feelings come of superstition in its rankest form; St. Paul had none of them. He loved suffering, not for itself, but for its object.

The Master had been in this, the Servant's bright example. How He shrank from suffering, let Gethsemane tell. Yet was He straitened till His baptism of suffering was accomplished, for by it the Father's glory and man's salvation were secured. The same feeling appears in the words before us. The afflictions which the Apostle coveted were "the afflictions of Christ" —sorrows, however abundant, by which his Master's glory and the cause of His Gospel were advanced. Again he says, "sufferings for you," "for His body's sake, which is the Church." Suffering was hallowed because its object was man's salvation, the blessing of Christ's Body, the comfort and edification of His people. Looking at suffering from this point of view, the devoted Apostle felt that he never could have too much of it. And God in this matter granted him his heart's desire. Affliction followed affliction, and grief followed grief, till he ended his glorious course on the blood-stained hill at Rome.

What wondrous lessons of devotedness, of self-sacrifice, are here! How is such a spirit

of love, such absorption in God's glory, such forgetfulness of self to be attained? By our beholding that glory as St. Paul did, "in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6). He beheld and loved; he beheld and adored; he beheld and consecrated himself at once in action and suffering, to God's service. If we would be followers of him as he also was of Christ, we must "covet earnestly" "the heavenly vision" with which he was gracious visited. "Open Thou mine eyes," said the Psalmist, "that I may behold wondrous things." Let such be our cry to "the God and Father of glory." We too shall behold, we too shall love. The love which we behold shall attract our love; men shall take knowledge of us that we have been with Christ, and that we live not to ourselves, but to Him (2 Cor. v. 14, 15).

FORTY-THIRD SUNDAY.

Christ's Suffering through Temptation.

HEBREWS II. 18; IV. 15.

"He Himself hath suffered, being tempted." "He was in all points tempted like as we are."

THE temptation of Christ is a mystery to many. How could He who was "without sin," they ask, *suffer* through temptation? And again, how could temptation be to Him who had no sympathy with evil, *the dire reality* it is to us sinners?

The second question may be answered first. Let us understand what temptation is. It is not sin in the heart—that is *temptation yielded to;* it is sin presented to the mind. Sin cannot be presented to the mind of God; He "cannot be tempted with evil" (James i. 13). The light unapproachable in which He dwells, cannot be defiled by the intrusion of its hellish darkness. The Son of God consented to be an exile from that light for a while, and to abide in the region

where evil had its seat. It surrounded Him continually; it met him at every step. His eye beheld sights of evil; His ear could not help listening to profane and wicked words. Strange sight, unwonted sound to the Holy One of God! Nay more, evil in its worst forms solicited His sympathy. When he was hungry, He was asked to distrust; when in danger, He was asked to presume; that He might win a crown without a cross, He was invited to disobey, to dishonour, to forsake the Father for ever! Such thoughts and suggestions are presented to us continually. But we do not feel their evil character, because we are ourselves evil. Temptation is as nothing to him who is in sympathy with sin. It must have been far otherwise to Him who was "without sin." His Temptation was "in all points" like our own. The most abandoned thought that ever was suggested to a human heart, was freely suggested to His. And what He felt of evil's dire reality when it thus surrounded and thus solicited Him, no tongue of man may tell.

Thus also it was that "He suffered, being tempted." Place the impure in the midst of

impurity; place the intemperate and profane in the midst of drunkenness, oaths and brawling—there is no suffering, the atmosphere is congenial. And let them be solicited to partake in what is going on around them, they consent at once and easily. But compel the pure to dwell among the impure, the temperate among the intemperate, the gentle and gracious among the rude and violent—there is suffering of the acutest kind. And if to the presence of these evil elements the power of solicitation is added, if purity is compelled to listen to proposals from which it instinctively recoils, and temperance and gentleness are harassed with importunities from which they turn with abhorrence, the suffering is immensely aggravated. And was it not thus with the Lord Jesus? He hated the impure, and yet it was ever beside Him. He abhorred evil in its every form, and yet in every form it solicited His approval, His sympathy. The Devil is the impersonation of evil, "that wicked One." And yet in the wilderness, in the garden, at the cross, he was side by side with the Father's Holy One. And did not then that Holy One suffer?

Strange that any should ask *why!* He suffered because He was holy.

And in proportion as we are holy, we too shall suffer when tempted. Purity of heart will make us feel the dire reality of evil, and when evil presses itself upon us, we shall recoil from it with loathing. If it comes nigh and solicits us without awakening any such feeling, let us tremble for ourselves. The Enemy is within the citadel, and if we make terms with him, we are lost. Let us ask Him, who is stronger than he, to cast him out and take possession. And sustained by the sympathy of a Saviour who Himself was tempted, let us maintain the battle to the end.

FORTY-FOURTH SUNDAY.

Beginning of Confidence to be Held Fast.

HEBREWS III. 14.

"For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end."

"PARTAKERS of Christ"—how rich is the blessing expressed in these words! To be partakers *of* is to be partakers *with* Christ, joint-heirs with Him of the Father's eternal love, the Father's endless mercy, the Father's boundless promises of grace and glory. God can bestow nothing more on any creature; the portion of the beloved Son contains all He has to give. What then shall we give for a blessing so large and abundant? We are not asked to give anything, it is as free as it is boundless, we obtain it by making Christ "our confidence." Here is the great truth of salvation by faith, for confidence and faith are one. We are ruined sinners. But the blood of Christ was shed for the remis-

sion of sin. And to make that blood our confidence, is to find the mercy of God. We have for ever forfeited all claim to God's love. But that love has been revealed in the Cross of the Lord Jesus; it waits to bless us; to look upwards, is to be blessed. We have no claim on His remembrance, either in time or in eternity. But He spared not His own Son; we are only called to trust Him; with that best and greatest gift He will "freely give us all things." The spirit of the world is the spirit of barter. "We have received," says St. Paul, "not the spirit of the world but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are *freely* given to us of God" (1 Cor. ii. 12.)

The ever memorable day of Pentecost was a living demonstration of this truth. St. Peter told the crowds who gathered to hear him on that day, that they had crucified the Christ of God. Fearful charge in the ears of a Jew to whom that name was more sacred than the name of father or mother! They asked, as well they might, "What shall we do?" *Do*, it might have been answered, DIE. What other doom

can await the murderers of the Son of God? Not such, however, was the reply of the Apostle. He turned the other side of the cross, he presented it as God's act for man's salvation, he bade them make the Crucified their confidence, and be baptized in His name. We know the blessed sequel. They believed the glad tidings of eternal mercy; and believing, were made partakers of Christ.

To this many say, we can understand it very well at the first. When God has been long forgotten, dishonoured, and disobeyed, the sinner can have no hope save in His mercy alone. But after the sinner has become a saint, and for years has served and glorified Him, the ground of confidence cannot be the same. It is the same; *the beginning* must be held steadfast *to the end.* Had we seen these Pentecost believers, when St. Paul, thirty years afterwards, visited the church at Jerusalem, we should have found them trusting as at the first in the blood shed on Calvary.

It cannot be otherwise with ourselves. Serve God as we may, we are less than unprofitable servants, never attaining to what is our duty

to do. Are we making progress in love and obedience? It is the fruit of progress in the knowledge of God. But as we know Him, our standard continually rises, and so far from being satisfied, we are more and more displeased with ourselves. Are we attaining to real goodness? It is of the very essence of real goodness to be unconscious of itself. Others may take knowledge of our humility; we are occupied only with the cause we have to be humble. Others may observe our love; we are occupied only with the goodness which so well deserves that love. Others may remark the devoted character of our obedience; we are occupied only with the claims God has on that obedience. Our confidence, therefore, cannot be in self; it must be in the Lord only. It is so in the beginning; it continues the same to the end.

FORTY-FIFTH SUNDAY.

The Two Immutable Things.

HEBREWS VI. 17, 18.

"God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath. That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us."

"GOD willing more abundantly." This is a wonderful expression, and as affecting as wonderful. The context tells us that man, in dealing with his fellow, is willing to give proof that he is sincere. God therefore is willing also, more willing than man can be, yea, "more abundantly willing;" there is nothing He will not do to convince us of His perfect sincerity. Man ends all strife, and banishes all doubt, by "an oath for confirmation." And God has condescended to give the same assurance.

The thing thus solemnly confirmed is "the immutability of His counsel." That counsel is

the Father's purpose to glorify the Son. And it concerns us because *the saved* are included with *the Saviour;* His life is their life, His glory their glory. "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one who seeth the Son and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John vi. 40). This is the "promise," and those who believe are its "heirs." And God is most desirous to assure them that this promise shall be faithfully kept.

It must be kept. Christ's people cannot be severed from Him, and God's purpose to glorify His Son is as "immutable" as His own being. But what is sure in the Divine mind, must also be made sure to man. Hence the oath. What was secret, is secret no longer; it has taken form and expression. There was one immutable thing before, now there are two. There was a counsel, now there is a counsel and an oath; there was a purpose, now that purpose is expressed. It is therefore "impossible for God to lie," and we who hope in Him "may have strong consolation."

The Old Testament is full of these confirma-

tions of the Divine counsel, these oaths of God. But that to which the words before us refer is the oath to Abraham. "When God made promise to Abraham because He could swear by no greater, He sware by himself, saying, surely blessing I will bless thee." And because "they which are of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham," this promise and oath alike belong to the believer. We find them *verbally* on Mount Moriah; but they are to be found before, in a much more solemn form. God told him to take a heifer and ram for sacrifice, and to divide them in two pieces. Abraham did so, and behold! "a smoking furnace and burning lamp passed between the pieces." It was the old form of covenant by sacrifice; he that passed between the parts of the victim, desired that he might be cut in sunder if he failed to keep his word. Almighty God adopted this form of adjuration! the smoking furnace and burning lamp were the emblems of His Majesty! He sware by his own life ("as I live, saith the Lord,") that He would keep His word to Abraham, that He would fulfil the "everlasting

covenant, a God to thee and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. xv. 9–18). That seed is Christ, and the people who believe on Christ's name. The oath between the pieces of the parted sacrifice was therefore the confirmation of the covenant of grace, *making us sure* of the eternal and immutable counsel of God.

But how do we know that this "strong consolation" is for us? what assures us that we are "the heirs of promise"? The faith of Abraham, the meekness of Moses, the zeal of Elijah were all too little to make us worthy of so rich a blessing. It is of grace; it is all ours if we "have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." The dying thief fled thither for refuge. "Lord, remember me," he said, "when thou comest in thy kingdom." Let us, acknowledging that we are sinners, make haste to the same refuge. The Paradise which received his spirit shall receive us; the kingdom of glory which is his inheritance shall be ours also in the coming day of the Lord.

FORTY-SIXTH SUNDAY.

Intention and Fruit of Chastening.

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HEBREWS XII. 9–11.

"Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby."

THE Hebrews were now suffering at the hand of man; they were the victims of his bigotry and intolerance. Yet the Apostle speaks of these sufferings as a Divine chastening. We learn from this that wicked men are but God's hand, and that *whatever* be the immediate cause of our trouble, that trouble is sent by Him. Let us take heed then of looking to second causes; it is a fearful aggravation of sorrow. God appoints affliction and arranges all its circumstances.

Children are naturally wayward, and the greatest blessing a child can know is to have his will subdued before a will of greater wisdom, forethought, and power than his own. This cannot be done without the child's will being crossed, and it cannot be crossed without occasioning him disappointment and pain. But "the fathers of our flesh" put us to this pain, to secure our future good. And what at the time was grievous has proved a blessing since; our "reverence" to them has been rewarded by the happiness of after years.

Our wills must in like manner be subdued before the will of the "Father of spirits." God therefore crosses these wills. He occasions us indeed in doing so, disappointment, grief, and pain; but what is "grievous" now, proves a blessing afterwards. Subjection to God's will is life. We are learning a lesson for eternity when we are subdued before Him.

The lessons of an earthly parent are "for a few days" only. And yet how earnestly are they inculcated, how carefully are they taught! This earnestness and care is in proportion to

the station in society which children are afterwards to fill. If we design them for a humble sphere, we are less careful. But if a man designs his son to be a senator of this illustrious land or a minister of state, his care is in proportion. And he who is training his son to be a king, will early teach that will subjection which is afterwards to rule the wills of others. Now God is preparing His children for a throne, we are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." Shall we be surprised then at the carefulness of our training? Shall we murmur if we are prepared to govern by being now taught to obey? Thus He, "the heir of all things," "learned obedience by the things which He suffered." He was to rule, and therefore He first submitted, "unto death, even the death of the Cross." The prayer "not as I will, but as Thou wilt" proclaimed the deep reality of such submission. The "name above every name" is that submission's eternal reward. And "the peaceable fruits of righteousness" which chastening brings forth in us, are a preparation for the fellowship of that reward.

We should not refuse to be afflicted, many say, if we saw these fruits spinging up. But God is never in haste either in providence or in grace; we shall not see them now, but "*afterwards.*" There are stages in affliction. Nature must first have its way. It is cruelty to say to the sufferer, you must not grieve. God never says so, nor is God angry when we grieve. How otherwise were affliction "grievous"? And if not grievous, how were it medicinal? After a time comes a mellowed feeling of resignation, this is the second stage. Then the affections, disappointed in the creature, are drawn to the Creator. Of all else we may be bereaved, of Him never. We therefore cling to Him. And as we cling, we become more obedient, more anxious in all things to please Him. We learn tenderness towards man also, for we have proved what human infirmity is, and we desire to spare others as we would ourselves be spared. This is the third stage, "the fruits of righteousness." And they are "peaceable"—they fill the heart with holy, blessed calm. In walking carefully before God, and tenderly toward our fellows, we are at peace at once with God and man.

FORTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY.

Patience.

JAMES I. 4.

"Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

OUR English word *patience* comes from a Latin word signifying *to suffer*. Patience is suffering the will of God. *To do*, or *to suffer* God's will, is the whole of practical Christianity: every real Christian act being the one or the other of these. Our doing of God's will has its perfect work when we do all that God bids us; our bearing of His will has its perfect work when we accept all that God lays upon us. Job is referred to in this Epistle as an example of patience. He had seven sons and three daughters; he had 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and a very great household; he was the greatest of all the men of the East. His sheep, his camels, his oxen, were stolen or destroyed; his children

were killed; he was made in one day childless and a beggar. He accepted God's dealing; "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," he said, "blessed be the name of the Lord." But God had more to lay on him. He had still his health. That was next taken; he was smitten with sore boils from the sole of his foot to his crown; he "took a potsherd to scrape himself withal," he "sat down among the ashes," naked, desolate, miserable. But his confidence in God failed him not, and anticipating still farther trial, even to the taking away of life, "though He slay me," he said, "yet will I trust in Him" (xiii. 15). Had God been pleased to slay Job, and had he died with these words on his lips, we should have said that his behaviour was the very perfection of patience. But perfection either in doing or in bearing was reserved for a greater than Job. Our Blessed Lord and Saviour was perfect in the doing of God's will, for He was obedient unto death. He was perfect in the bearing of it also, for God was pleased to slay Him, and "my God, my God," was the expression of His faith to the end. If we ask

then for the full exemplification of the words of St. James before us, we have it on Mount Calvary. Patience had its perfect work when Jesus died.

How shall we attain to this patience? It is the fruit of faith. "Be followers of them," says another Apostle, "who through *faith and patience* inherit the promises" (Heb. vi. 12). For faith acquaints us with God's love. And what love lays on us we learn to bear cheerfully. It acquaints us with Christ's love. We remember, when His hand smites us, that it was wounded once for our sakes. Such smiting therefore cannot break our head, it is accounted a precious balm. Thus it was with the Lord Jesus, "the cup which *my Father* hath given me, shall not I drink it?" (John xviii. 11). And thus it is with those in whom His mind is formed. One with Him in faith, they are one in patience too.

The man who is thus perfect in patience is, in the judgment of this Apostle, "a perfect man," "entire and wanting nothing." For he who is thus prepared to bear, will also be pre-

pared to do; and will reflect the image of that great Doer, that uncomplaining Bearer, who finished on Calvary His brief but all-glorious course. And what can any of us desire beyond, or in comparison of an attainment so lofty? The world indeed thinks otherwise. A man may do or bear God's will, men say, and yet want many things. What things? One man answers wealth; another stipulates for pleasure; a third is wretched without honour and advancement. But here is just the difference between man's judgment and the judgment of God; the touch-stone whereby we may try ourselves and know with whom we agree. "Daily Bread," as we learn from the Lord's Prayer, is in the judgment of the Lord Jesus, all of this world which His people need. If we are of a different mind, we do not agree with Him; and if His judgment and ours diverge on a point so vital, we are not at one with God.

FORTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY.

Charity.

1 PETER IV. 8.

"Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

"CHARITY" is love. "Fervent charity" is love in its warmth and energy. This fervent charity "shall cover," *i.e.*, forgive sins, not a few sins but many, "the multitude of sins." "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me," said this Apostle, "and I forgive him? till seven times?" Jesus said unto him, "I say not unto thee, till seven times, but until seventy times seven" (Matt. xviii. 21, 22).

Cover expresses the completeness of the forgiveness. The sins are put out of sight, they are hidden, they can be found no more. And this, not because they are few, not because there are many palliations, not because the sinner has many claims upon our mercy, but because of the

"fervent charity" of him whom those sins have injured.

"*Above all things,*" says the Apostle, "have this fervent charity." It is Christlike, it is God-like. To forgive another's sin is the expression of love. And "God is Love." Christ was the revelation of that Eternal Love, that uncreated charity. How beautiful is the type of the fire on the altar, that was ever to be burning and never to go out! (Levit. vi. 13). It sets forth the *fervour* of that charity, the unquenchable love that is ever burning in the bosom of the Blessed God. The type was gloriously fulfilled when the Lord Jesus gave Himself on God's altar, a sacrifice for the sins of the world. And it is the first duty of God's people, of Christ's saved ones, to be like Himself.

God is still, in this respect, His people's example. He is the Great Coverer of sin. His fervent charity puts it out of sight, it is remembered no more. "The sin of Judah shall be sought for, and *it shall not be found*" (Jerem. l. 20). "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin *is covered*" (Ps. xxxii. 1).

We have a beautiful type of this under the legal dispensation. The tables of the law contained God's accusation of His people, for "by the law was the knowledge of sin." These tables were kept in the Most Holy Place (1 Kings viii. 6–9). But though we had made the most diligent search within its sacred precincts, we should have failed to find them. They were laid up within the ark of the testimony; its lid *covered* and shut them out from view. God only could remove that lid, for it formed the throne on which He sat between the Cherubim of glory. But He would not remove it, for it also formed the Mercy Seat; it was His glory to cover with His mercy the record of His people's transgressions.

This mercy was vouchsafed through the blood of sacrifice. The High Priest sprinkled it upon the Mercy Seat and before the Mercy Seat. And He who sat between the Cherubim accepted the Mediation of His Minister, and sent Him forth to bless His people.

The Antitype of this ministry is ever proceeding on high. The forgiveness of iniquity,

the covering of sin, is the Divine response to the plea of "Jesus Christ the Righteous." His pierced hands and feet are the eternal memorial that sin was remembered and visited on Calvary; why then should it be remembered — why should it be visited more? A dying sinner once addressed this All-glorious Advocate, "Lord, remember me." His prayer was heard (Luke xxiii. 42, 43). And when we appeal to the same "fervent charity," our prayer is heard also.

The "charity" in which we hope, stamps then its image on ourselves, and the Apostle's exhortation finds hearts prepared to welcome it. God has forgotten our debt of ten thousand talents, we cannot remember the hundred pence which another may owe to us. To exact it, were to be "overcome of evil;" we rather follow God's example, and in our "fervent charity" "overcome evil with good" (Rom. xii. 21).

FORTY-NINTH SUNDAY.

A Divine Nature.

2 PETER I. 4.

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

THESE words ought to be rendered, *a* Divine nature. *The* Divine nature is incommunicable. A Divine nature is simply a nature from God, the heart and mind of the Lord Jesus. And this is not only communicable, but actually communicated to all His people; "God *hath sent forth* the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." Let us observe how the Apostle finishes his sentence—"crying Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). This is the mark of the nature which comes from God, "not the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption" (Rom. viii. 15).

How then are we made partakers of this spirit

of adoption? Through the "exceeding great and precious promises" of God. These are all contained in the pregnant words of the collect, "the blessed hope of everlasting life,"—the hope of the everlasting vision, of the everlasting enjoyment of God. Who shall measure the exceeding greatness of such a promise?—who shall estimate its preciousness? For that Eternal One is our Father. He combines Divine ability to bless with the depth of paternal affection. His presence must fill every heart with joy, must tune every mouth to sing, and that for ever.

This promise is given, as the same collect reminds us, "in our Saviour Jesus Christ." For it is in Him that God is thus revealed. Love declares a father. And "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." Mercy and compassion declare Him. And He "who is the image of the invisible God" "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Willingness to bless declares Him. And God's own word is, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you" (Matt. vii. 7). The gift already bestowed is the

pledge of every other. "He that spared not His own Son, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32).

When the Spirit of truth enables us thus to apprehend the blessed God, He of necessity breathes into us the spirit of adoption. *Abba, Father*, is the response below to the vision of glory which beams on us from above. And what is thus communicated is a Divine nature, the mind of Christ; "my Father and your Father" are the Redeemer's own words. In the performance of duty, we learn with Him to say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Ps. xl. 8). In perplexity and trouble His words rise to our lips, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee" (Mark xiv. 36). Nature may be overwhelmed with anguish, and rebel against the rod of God. But we still it with His solemn question, "the cup which my Father hath given me, shall not I drink it?" How different this from the life which earthly parents bestow! "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John iii. 6).

It is this knowledge of God and fervent love

to Him that makes the promise of everlasting life so *precious*, so *exceeding great*. "We shall see Him as He is," says the beloved disciple; "we shall be like Him." The child desires to see the Father; his dearest hope is to reflect that Father's glorious image. And so, having this hope in us, we purify ourselves now, "even as He is pure" (1 John iii. 2, 3). For there is no such preservative from impurity as the power of a pure affection, and the prospect, another day, of union with its cherished object. If this is true even of our fellow-creatures, how much more of the blessed God! "The love of the Father," shed abroad in our hearts, keeps us pure in the midst of impurity, temperate in the midst of lust, single-eyed and simple-minded in the midst of the abounding corruption of the world. We hope soon to be with God. We therefore strive to keep our garments clean; we would not appear in His presence as His children ought not to be. The Apostle's words are thus verified—by the promises of the blessed gospel we escape the corruption of the world. May God evermore make such experience ours!

FIFTIETH SUNDAY.

Virtue.

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2 PETER I. 5.

"And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue."

VIRTUE is energy and resolution in doing the will of God. It is kindred with *patience*, which is the quiet endurance of that will. And as these together make up the entire Christian character, this text of St. Peter may be paralleled with that of St. James, "Let patience have her perfect work."

The root of patience is faith; "the trying of your faith worketh patience." The same faith is the root of virtue, the stimulant of energy, the sustainer of holy resolution—"add to your faith virtue." "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," is the expression at once of energy and of patience. For it is the language of the heart which rejoices to do, and is content

to bear, whatever God may appoint. And it springs from faith, the faith of the spirit of adoption, "Our Father which art in heaven."

Our Blessed Lord was Himself the pattern of this faith; the "holy Child" ever confided in the Father. And He said before He ascended, "My Father and your Father." Partakers of His faith we partake at once of His patience and His energy—the patience that endured the contradiction of sinners—the energy that confronted opposition, hatred, and violence even unto death—"not to be daunted, not to be terrified, not to be overcome." Christ had the Father's message to deliver—"He gave Me a commandment what I should say" (John xii. 49). And though exposed to mortal peril in delivering it, He abated not a word; because He believed, He spake. The servants had their Master's message to deliver, and were exposed to the *same peril* in delivering it. But "we have *the same spirit of faith*," says His persecuted minister, "we also believe and therefore speak." We do not fear them who can only kill the body. They killed the Lord Jesus, but God raised Him

from the dead. They will kill us too, but God will raise us up also, therefore "we faint not" (2 Cor. iv. 13–16).

We have this exemplified in the illustrious Moses. "By faith he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." And in these last words we have the secret of faith's power, its "virtue." It is "the evidence of things not seen," it opens the eyes and discovers to us the invisible God at our right hand. And we are in consequence indomitable. Thus Moses "forsook Egypt;" thus Joshua subdued Canaan; thus David "turned to flight the armies of the aliens;" thus Samuel in times of profligacy and corruption, "wrought righteousness" before God and man (Heb. xi. 27–34). Let us ask for a portion of that spirit which rested on them; let us give "all diligence" to add it to our faith.

The principle of mightiest energy is love, it "endureth all things," it "never faileth." God's love in the heart will embolden us to meet any difficulty, to confront any opposition, to encounter any suffering for His sake. Devoted love to man will do the same; there is no such principle of

courage. It was "goodwill to man and zeal for God" that made the Saviour Himself long for the baptism of suffering and pant to reach the Cross. And the same "noble flame, kindled in the breast" of Saul of Tarsus, made him ready "not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts xxi. 13). But faith is still the root of all, for love is the child of faith. Faith reveals the Invisible, and beholding Him as He is, we learn to love Him. It discovers to us His love to man; we are changed into its image and love after His example. And with the untiring energy which that holy principle inspires, we go forth to seek God's glory and to promote man's welfare in the world.

It is to this that St. Peter exhorts. He has spoken just before of our being partakers of a "Divine nature" through faith in the promises of God. And he would have us to stir up the "virtue" of that nature, the energy of faith and love.

FIFTY-FIRST SUNDAY.

The Three Earthly Witnesses.

1 JOHN V. 8.

"There are Three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one."

To what do these Three bear witness? Evidently to the truth which is the subject-matter of this whole chapter, that Jesus is the Son of God. The world said that He was a deceiver, that His claims were impious, that His death was deserved. But these Three declare, and corroborate each other in declaring, that He was the Son in the bosom of the Father, that He was hated without a cause, that His death was the propitiation for sin. And by faith, says St. John, of this threefold witness, we overcome the world.

Who are these Three Witnesses? "The Spirit" is the Holy Ghost. At the time when these words were written, His gifts in all their

plenitude were in the midst of the Church, seen and heard and known of all men. There was "the word of wisdom," and "the word of knowledge," and "faith," and "the working of miracles," and "prophecy," and "discerning of spirits," and "divers kinds of tongues," and "the interpretation of tongues." "All these," says St. Paul, "worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. xii. 8-11). And every such gift, every such miraculous endowment, was a distinct witness that Jesus was the Son of God. "The Water and the Blood" corroborated this witness. They corroborate it still. They seem to be the two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. *Sacraments are witnesses.* People speak of *the efficacy* of the Sacraments. They forget that Sacraments cannot create anything, that they are but witnesses to that which already exists. To create is to bring something into existence which had no existence before. But what does Baptism bring into existence? Not God's love, else it brings God Himself into existence, "God *is love.*" Not God's forgiving

mercy, else it ascends to heaven, and brings Christ down to die; forgiving mercy is contained in His precious blood. Not God's Fatherly grace; that was manifested on Calvary two thousand years ago. It witnesses to all these things. The invitation, "Suffer the little children to come," is itself a witness; and the sacred name in which they are baptized is a fuller and larger witness. To ask, can a child be saved who unfortunately has missed baptism? is to suppose that because the witness is lacking, the thing witnessed is lacking also. Neither does the Lord's Supper create anything. The broken bread is the witness of His body broken for us; the wine poured forth is the witness of His blood shed for our sins. That cup of wine moreover, *as yet untasted by Himself*, is the witness that He comes again; He has promised to drink it with us in the kingdom of our Father (Luke xxii. 17, 18). But these things are independent of any act of ours. Whether we eat the bread or whether we forbear, He loved us; whether we drink the wine, or whether we refuse to drink, He gave Himself for us. And whether

we look for Him or are contented with this world as our all, He comes again to gather His own to Himself. While yet He abides away, the sacraments are His witnesses, the seals of His truth, the pledges of His sincerity. To receive their witness is to live, for salvation is by faith; to reject it is to perish, for perdition is by unbelief.

The whole efficacy of the Sacraments is here. They are nothing in themselves. If their witness be rejected, their efficacy is destroyed. It is in THE TRUTH THEY WITNESS TO that their saving power lies hid. For it is the truth to which the Holy Spirit witnesses, viz., that Jesus is the Son of God. And "who is he that overcometh the world," and sin, and death, and Satan, but the man who has been taught to believe it?

FIFTY-SECOND SUNDAY.

Silence in Heaven.

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REVELATION VIII. 1.

"And when He had opened the Seventh Seal, there was silence in Heaven about the space of half an hour."

A DOCTRINAL truth of the most precious kind underlies this prophetical symbol.

"There was *silence in Heaven.*" The preceding chapter has recorded the very opposite; all Heaven has been jubilant and making melody. The company of the saved "of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues," have been crying "with a *loud voice*, Salvation to our God and to the Lamb." The angels in the outer circle have been falling on their faces, crying out as they worship, "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be to our God for ever!" Wherefore this ecstatic praise? God is pouring forth the riches of His grace. His people are

before His throne, and He is dwelling among them. The Lamb Himself is feeding them and satisfying their thirst from the living Fountain. And God the Father of the Lamb is wiping all tears from their eyes.

In the midst of all this joy the seventh seal is opened, announcing a new act in the mighty drama. Silence falls on the jubilant multitude. The voices which have been filling Heaven with praise, are hushed as in a moment; the hands which have been sweeping the golden harps, are staid upon the strings. And this silence, this hushed expectation, continues for "half an hour.'

We asked, wherefore the praise? We ask now, wherefore the silence? God's wrath is about to go forth; hail and fire are to be cast upon the earth, burning up every green thing, and turning the sea into blood; the sun, moon, and stars are to be smitten; the smoke of the pit is to darken the air; the third part of men are to be slain. And all Heaven contemplates with awe *the wrath of the God of Love, the vengeance of the Father of mercies.* It is "His work," but "*His strange work;*" "His act," but "*His strange act*" (Isaiah

xxviii. 21). His "nature and property is to show mercy and forgive."

Yet have they sympathy with the wrath whose forthgoing they contemplate with such awe. They have known the love of the Blessed God, and have taken His part against an apostate world. That world shed their blood when they spake to it in His Name. And already has their cry ascended, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge?" (vi. 9, 10). Nay more, when transgression shall have come to the full, and the mystery of God shall be finished, and the reason of His judgments made known, this now silent company shall shout, "Alleluia!" And that shout shall fill the Heaven of heavens, like the noise of many waters, and "the voice of mighty thunderings" (xix. 1–4). But the wrath is going forth now, and they are *silent.*

What lessons are here! In proportion as we apprehend God's love, we shall have sympathy with His wrath, we shall justify Him in all the hard words He has spoken, in the most awful threatenings He has pronounced against iniquity.

And when that wrath shall be revealed, it shall command our eternal sympathy; His people shall be at one with their God. Yet the thought of it now shall fill us with solemn awe; we shall look on those who are treasuring it up against themselves, with the tenderest compassion; we shall go softly all our days in the bitterness of our souls. The opposite spirit is the certain sign of a hard and unsanctified heart. We see in this day only too much of it. Men wrangle about *eternal punishment*, consigning their fellows to ever-during misery as if they cut off a dog's neck. Alas, they know not the import of the fearful words which they thus bandy about in controversy. Let us ask from God the grace of a tender heart. And when tempted, on so dread a theme, to speak or think with lightness, let us remember the words before us, "when He had opened the seventh seal, *there was silence in Heaven* for the space of half an hour."

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